LONG LIVE VINYL

SLEAFORD MODS
The lowdown on the year's angriest LP

Classic Album ENTERTAINMENT!
GANG OF FOUR

FEATURED
Brazilian vinyl
Fire Records
Dhani Harrison

ESSENTIAL HIP-HOP

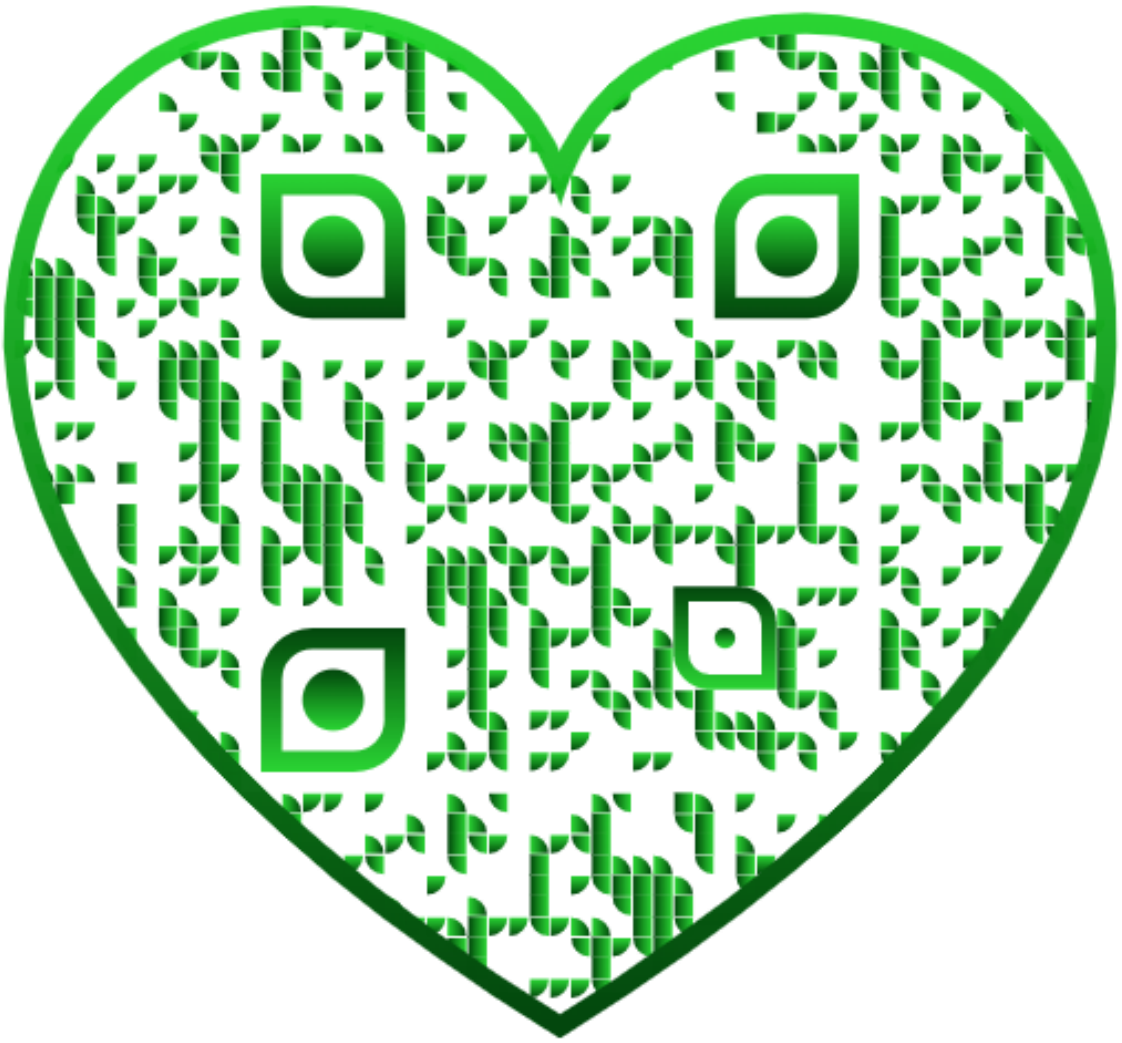
ISSUE 10
JANUARY 2018
£6.99

THE TOP 100 ALBUMS OF 2017

+ **GEAR OF THE YEAR**

MUST-BUY TURNTABLES, AMPS, SPEAKERS AND HEADPHONES

THE PICK OF THIS YEAR'S BEST VINYL RELEASES + 2017'S TOP 10 REISSUES



THE SENSATIONAL MILLION-SELLING SERIES CONTINUES

CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS

WITH

ELVIS

AND THE

ROYAL PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

THE BRAND NEW ALBUM - OUT NOW

Welcome...

The idea that we're currently mired in some form of terminal musical slump, where monolithic, teetering piles of reissues of *The Dark Side Of The Moon* and *Rumours* tower over the musical landscape, is challenged thoroughly by our Top 100 Albums Of 2017 list this issue. Neatly sidestepping the responsibility, we enlisted a panel of 35 of the great and good from the UK's music industry – label bosses, bands, record-shop owners, festival organisers and our writers, and asked each to nominate their 20 favourite new records of the year. Who says democracy is a beleagured concept in 2017? Rather than coming up with a narrow, hive-mind list of the 'same old, same old', our panel named more than 300 different albums from all kinds of diverse artists and genres. One of our experts, and we're not naming names (we'll just call her Megan), even voted for Harry Styles. As a barometer of the strength-in-depth of the music industry, our wildly varied 100 is surely a sign that a mind-bending amount of great new music was made in 2017 – and it's all pressed on vinyl and available to buy at your local independent record shop. We'll let you turn to p34 to find out who's at No. 1, but tips of the hat go to The War On Drugs, The National, Kevin Morby, Phoebe Bridgers, LCD Soundsystem, Slowdive, Jane Weaver and Big Thief for making some of the *Long Live Vinyl* team's favourite records of the year – let us know if you agree with our 100. Elsewhere this month, we were served another reminder of the enduring love for vinyl at the Record Planet Mega Record & CD Fair in Utrecht, as 60,000 cratediggers filled the Jaarbeurs Convention Centre. It remains the world's biggest record fair and if you haven't been, we'd advise booking your flights for the next one in April. Also in this end-of-year extravaganza, we round up the best turntables, speakers, headphones and amps in our Gear Of The Year awards. Don't step out into the Christmas-shopping melee without checking out our winners.

A mind-bending amount of great new music was made in 2017 – and it's all pressed on vinyl and available to buy at your local record shop

We also tell the story of Brazilian vinyl, hear from the outspoken Sleaford Mods, meet comic book and sleeve artist Dave McKean and delve into the world of videogame soundtracks.

Finally, we'd like to wish you all a merry, music-filled Christmas and a healthy, peaceful New Year. Thank you, too, for making *Long Live Vinyl*'s first 12 months such a success. We'll strive to provide the vinyl community with an even better magazine in 2018.

Gary Walker *Editor*

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LONG LIVE VINYL

The *Long Live Vinyl* team pick their favourite albums of 2017

Gary Walker
Sleep Well Beast
The National

Owen Bailey
Kelly Lee Owens
Kelly Lee Owens

Jonny Highett
Prisoner
Ryan Adams

Andy Cottle
A Deeper Understanding
The War On Drugs

Ian Peel
Radio Cineola Trilogy
The The

Meet our expert contributors…

Simon Raymonde
Simon was the bassist and keyboard player in the Cocteau Twins; he's currently in Lost Horizons. He launched the independent label Bella Union in 1997. His label has been a home to bands including Fleet Foxes, The Flaming Lips, Midlake, Father John Misty, John Grant, Explosions In The Sky and Lanterns On The Lake. He's also produced many great albums.

Giacomo Lee
Giacomo Lee is an author and DJ from London dedicated to music new and old from East Asia. His youth was spent interviewing the likes of Hood and Stars and he's since written for *Shortlist*, *io9* and Japan's *Metropolis* magicazine. His proudest achievement is writing his novel *Funereal*, a darkly comedic look at the shadowy side of the K-pop industry.

Chris Parkin
After stapling together fanzines as a teenager, Chris won promotion to the world of proper music journalism and a job at *Time Out London* in the early 2000s. He's since written for the *Guardian*, *BBC*, *NME*, *RBMA*, *Glastonbury Free Press* and others. He continues to cherish the memory of Mick Hucknall and Ray Davies hanging up on him in a strop during an interview.

Michael Leonard
Michael began writing about music 27 years ago while waiting for a 'proper job'. He's been editor of *Hip Hop Connection* (RIP), *Guitar & Bass* and *Music Radar*, and contributed to *Billboard*, *Mojo*, *Guitar World*, *NME*, *Gibson.com* and more. He's played Jimmy Page's guitars, had Ice-T threaten him and visited the Osbournes for tea… not all on the same day.

Gary Tipp
Gary has been collecting vinyl since time immemorial and still can't walk past a charity shop without going in on the off chance there's a mint treasure nestled somewhere in between the easy listening and the obligatory copy of Paul Young's *No Parlez*. He's also been writing words for magazines for longer than anyone can remember.

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THE NUMBER 1 AUCTION HOUSE WORLDWIDE FOR VINYL

ACCEPTING ENTRIES FOR JANUARY - APRIL 2018 SALES

QUARTERLY AUCTIONS OF RARE & COLLECTABLE VINYL AND MUSIC MEMORABILIA
PLUS ONE OFF SPECIALIST SALES
JANUARY 2018: PUNK, INDIE & ALTERNATIVE VIYL RECORDS
FEBRUARY 2018: RAE& COLLECTABLE VINYL & MUSIC MEMORABILIA
MARCH 2018: THE BEATLES COLLECTION
APRIL 2018: RARE & COLLECTABLE VINYL RECORDS - 'LIVE FROM UTRECHT'

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COLLECTED - The Alan Wilder/Depeche Mode Collection. A historic equipment, vinyl & memorabilia auction. One off sale for Alan Wilder.
Total sales value £300,000

ALAN MCGEE (CREATION RECORDS)
Collection of artwork and memorabilia from McGee's time in the music business
Total sales value £30,000

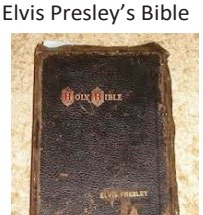
PORL THOMPSON (THE CURE)
Auction of instruments, equipment, stage clothing, artwork & memorabilia.
Total sales value £75,000

THE IAN CHAPEL COLLECTION
A life's work. One off sale of one collectors entire collection of over 5,000 records.
Total sales value £80,000

Ringo's Help Cape

SOLD £61,000

Elvis Presley's Bible



SOLD £59,000

63 Beatles Negatives

SOLD £29,900

Oasis Demo

SOLD £6,075

SOLD £6,785

SOLD £1,955

Rolling Stones acetate

SOLD £4,012

Sex Pistols poster

SOLD £1,121

Please Please Me b/g stereo

SOLD £10,527

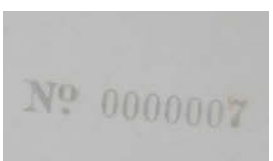
SOLD £1,900

SOLD £1,579

Signed 7" Please Please Me

SOLD £8,600

White Album 0000007



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An estimated 60,000 crateddiggers and 500 dealers from all over the world flooded through the doors of the Jaarbeurs Convention Centre for the 48th edition of the Record Planet Mega Record & CD Fair in Utrecht, the Netherlands. The *Long Live Vinyl* stall is in there somewhere, too…

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Records & Sleeves from Japan
MILES DAVIS
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On the record

SUPERMARKET SWEEP

Mention that supermarkets sell vinyl, and you can almost taste the indifference. Yet Sainsbury's are a serious player in the market, with their own record label…

Responsible, in part, for accelerating the whole vinyl revival, Sainsbury's began selling records in March 2016 and, since then, have sold over 120,000 LPs. They've now gone one stage further and partnered with Saint Etienne's Bob Stanley to create and curate their own record label.

Own Label (get it?) kicks off with two compilations – *Coming Into Los Angeles (A Taste Of West Coast)*, featuring The Monkees, The Byrds and Fleetwood Mac, and *Hi-Fidelity (A Taste Of Stereo Sound)*, featuring Oldfield, Eno and Moroder, – available in 163 stores this month.

"I love putting the familiar together in an unexpected way," Bob tells *Long Live Vinyl*, "so *Hi-Fidelity*… is made up of tracks you'd have heard in hi-fi shops, things used to test out the quality of new gear: crisp drums, deep bass, swooping synths and orchestration. Like *Question* by The Moody Blues, that's a classic 'test' record."

What other themes or volumes can we expect? "It depends on which archives we can dig into, but I'd love to put some Motown and Atlantic compilations together, lesser-known recordings by big names. Then there's synth-pop, prog, film soundtracks, and hopefully, things that have been out on CD but have yet to come out on vinyl."

BRAND SKANKIN' NEW
***Treasure Isle* is a new boxset from Trojan Records, comprising replicas of 10 rare ska 7"s – many by Duke Reid, with appearances by The Zodiacs and Baba Brooks – also featuring a booklet by Jamaican music historian Brian Keyo.**

ROUGH DIAMONDS
Australian rockers Airbourne get the collectors' box treatment this month with *Diamond Cuts*, gathering their first three studio albums, a B-sides collection (with two previously unavailable tracks) and a documentary DVD.

PURPLE PATCH
Parlophone delve into the Deep Purple back catalogue with *A Fire In The Sky*, a three-LP, 27-song set which includes the US single edit of *Burn* and the radio edit of *Bad Attitude*.

Christmas Treats

It's not often you see The Beatles and Charlie Brown in the same sentence, but they have one thing in common – a forthcoming vinyl reissue. Apple Records have dusted down, remastered and reissued The Beatles' Christmas flexi-discs for a limited, coloured vinyl 7" boxset, with highlights including 1966's psychedelic *Pantomime – Everywhere It's Christmas* and the music/vocal mashups of 1967's *Christmas Time (Is Here Again)*.

"Spanning 1963 to 1969, The Beatles' holiday recordings were originally pressed on flexi-discs and mailed to fan-club members each December," Apple Records tell us. "Never released beyond the fan club until now, the group's seven holiday releases have been newly pressed on a rainbow of 7" coloured vinyl singles for the Christmas records boxset… a limited-edition collection presenting each single accompanied by a 16-page booklet."

For Boxing Day, look out for Craft Recordings' high-end vinyl reissue of the Vince Guaraldi Trio's *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. The 180-gram issue will be housed in an old-school tip-on jacket (with rare artwork from the original 1965 release).

Certified quadruple-platinum in 2016, it's one of the best-selling jazz albums of all time. Only Miles Davis' *Kind Of Blue* has sold more!

Turn to p107 for our review of Apple/EMI's limited-edition boxset release of The Beatles' *Christmas Record Box* of 7" singles

Popmaster Live! Returns In March 2018

Book your tickets now for the 2018 Popmaster Live! quiz event with Ken Bruce, brought to you by *Classic Pop*...

Following the success of this year's inaugural Popmaster Live! event, our sister title, *Classic Pop*, is looking forward to the event's return on Saturday, 3 March 2018. Once again, *Classic Pop* will be teaming up with BBC Radio 2's Popmaster himself, Ken Bruce and Phil 'The Collector' Swern, for a fun-filled night of pop trivia and top quizzing.

The DJ's weekday show regularly attracts a listenership of more than eight million, and this live version of his daily *Popmaster* quiz will be carefully crafted by Phil to test all levels of expertise. Consisting of 11 rounds, including Intros And Outros, Guilty Pleasures and Missing Words, Popmaster Live! will test your knowledge on a wide range of pop music from the late 70s, iconic 80s and early 90s.

SELECT A DREAM TEAM

2017's event attracted quizzers from across the country and was heralded as a huge success. A total of 32 teams went head-to-head, with Neil Barker from Manchester and his team walking away triumphant. Winner Neil said: "Popmaster Live! was a thoroughly enjoyable and well-organised event. The team and I are all listeners to the *Forgotten 80s* radio show on Absolute 80s and I'd be lying if I said we didn't enjoy winning. However, I really wasn't expecting it."

With teams – such as the Revenge Of Table 13 – already signed up for next year's event, the competition for 2018 is hotting up. So start selecting your dream team now and join us in London. Teams can feature up to eight people per table. You can also enter the quiz as an individual or a couple, and you will be allocated to a team.

EYES ON THE PRIZE

There will be many surprises and prizes up for grabs on the night, and it's not just the honour of walking away the winner at Popmaster Live!. Each member of the top team will receive a pair of Audio-Technica headphones, worth £169. The ATH-AR5BT headphones are a Bluetooth, high-resolution-audio compatible, compact over-ear design, with up to 30 hours of battery life.

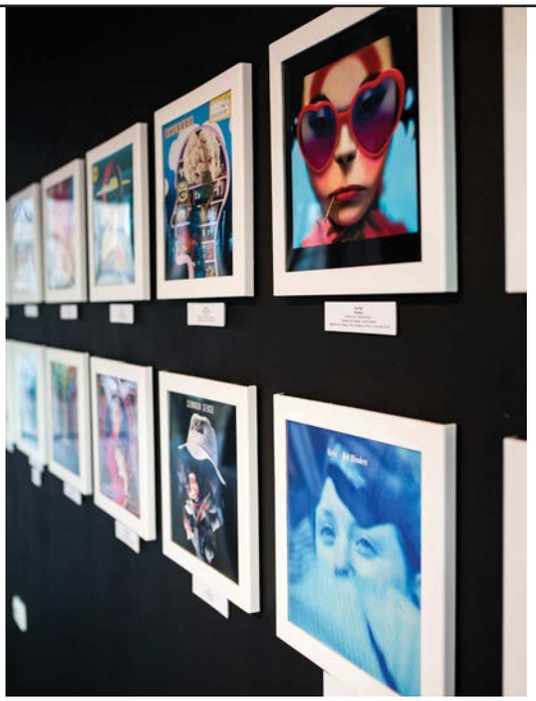
Book your Earlybird tickets for Popmaster Live! – each member of the winning team receives a pair of ATH-AR5BT headphones

GET QUIZZING

Earlybird tickets are available now and cost £25. For those who fancy the full VIP treatment, special Earlybird tickets can be bought for £55. This VIP package gives you the opportunity to meet Ken and Phil in person at an intimate drinks reception before the quiz. You will also receive a complimentary copy of the *Popmaster Quizbook*, worth £9.99, which you can get signed on the night, as well as front-row tables. Popmaster Live! takes place on 3 March at 155 Bishopsgate in London and runs from 7pm to 10pm. For further information and to book tickets, visit popmasterlive.eventbrite.co.uk.

MORE RAMONES TO OWN
Sheena Is A Punk Rocker **and** ***Rockaway Beach*** **are the gems in the latest Ramones 40th Anniversary reissue.** ***Rocket To Russia*** **features two completely different mixes of the album in a 3CD/1LP 12"x12" box.**

COMPUTER LOVE
4AD celebrate the 10th anniversary of Jóhann Jóhannsson's influential ***IBM 1401, A User's Manual*** **by giving it a double clear-vinyl pressing in a gatefold sleeve by v23's Chris Bigg, and adding two live tracks.**



12 YEARS ON 12 INCHES

BEST ART VINYL AWARDS TURN 12

The Best Art Vinyl sleeve-design awards are 12 years old this month, so what better title for their new exhibition than 12 Years On 12 Inches? Unlike previous events, which have all been firmly London-based, this year's Awards kick off simultaneously in Barnsley, Bologna and Budapest.

Each installation will showcase all 50 nominees for the award of Best Art Vinyl 2017, alongside an accompanying gallery of previous winners, which includes Matthew Cooper's design for The Last Shadow Puppets' *Everything You've Come To Expect* from last year and Jamie Briggs' design for The Black Lamps' eponymous 2015 album.

"The record sleeve format has always been the natural 'art' partner to the music," Best Art Vinyl's founder Andrew Heeps tells us. "Each year, we're taken aback as to how creative the designers become using this 12" canvas to create their art. So many 'household names' are now designing vinyl records." See www.artvinyl.com for more info.

Boxset Of The Apes

Gorillaz have finally unveiled details of the Deluxe vinyl edition of their recent album *Humanz*, six months after originally planned. As we revealed back in Issue 3, the boxset centres around a 54-page, cloth-bound, foil-blocked book of Jamie Hewlett artwork housed in a bespoke 12" carry case. They'd originally planned to announce the musical elements of the box in the summer but, better late than never, we can now reveal that *Humanz* has been rethought as 14 individual 12" coloured discs. Each is a different colour and comes in an individually artworked sleeve, and each one will include a bonus non-album track – many of which are previously unreleased – on the B-side. Also out this month is a new, digital-only Gorillaz collab with Little Simz.

RARE RÓS RELEASES
Sigur Rós are celebrating their inaugural Norður Og Niður festival in Reykjavík in December with a series of limited-edition vinyl releases that will be on sale at the event and at the band's online shop shortly after. See sigur-ros.co.uk for more info.

THE REDDING PRESENT

With *(Sittin' On) The Dock Of The Bay* approaching its 50th anniversary, this month sees the release of *The Definitive Studio Albums Collection*, a seven-LP boxset that reissues and restores all of Otis Redding's original studio albums. Redding's recording career was tragically short (he died in a plane crash three days after recording his best-known song), yet this box is full of legendary soul tracks, not least his cover of The Rolling Stones' *(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction* and a pre-Aretha Franklin take on *Respect*. "All of the albums replicate the original packaging," Rhino Records tell us, "from the sleeve artwork down to small details like the original record labels, notably Volt and Stax."

Simon says

SIMON RAYMONDE

The memories, the fun and the Red Bull all begin to flow as Bella Union's founder returns to the world of being in a band with Lost Horizons…

I've been sitting on the fence for 20 years, but I just jumped back over. I'm sure many of the bands on Bella Union will hope that I get back on the other side soon, because it must be massively annoying seeing the label guy getting the attention all of a sudden, and taking up valuable column inches. But I reckon I deserve a little moment out in the sun, after two decades of living under a rock running Bella Union. And I'll readily admit, it hasn't been an easy readjustment.

The usual label emails about production issues, contract negotiations, release schedules and timelines don't go away just because I decided to get a record out this month, so I'm trying to work out how to balance the additional workload. Okay, that's a lie – I'm not trying to work it out, I am failing miserably. I've barely slept for a month, my arms ache from playing the guitar so much (I'm not a guitarist by trade) and I have a nervous tic in my right eye (not like a shy parasite that lives on a dog, although I might have one of those and just not realised it).

But I wouldn't change a thing. It's not as if I've just come out of a coma after 20 years to witness a new world in front of me, but actually, it's not far off! Being in a band with no drama is not something I have that much experience of, and it was a little unnerving to start with. Finding a band to perform this music live hasn't been easy, but as I write, we've just played our first show at Liverpool Music Week – and it was a blast.

With over half the singers on the recordings having their own active careers and also being American, it was never going to be possible to use all the album's vocalists for the UK tour. But I decided that if we were going to do it, we had to do it properly. So I spent a while looking within Brighton, where I live and where the music scene is so vibrant right now, and I found three singers to cover all the tracks with female vocals, and Ed Riman (Hilang Child) who I was already keen to work with, to cover all the male vocals (two of which are his, anyway).

Bethany Cannon, who sings *Bones* on the album, and Helen Ganya Brown (who is Dog In The Snow and also plays in Fear Of Men) are two of the main vocalists; then there's Richie Thomas and my old pal Chris Anderson, from former Bella Union band Departure Lounge and current improvisational band from Brighton, ZOFFF. Asya Fairchild – just 21 and from a cool band called Blush – is a great young bassist and singer, and she was the final piece of the jigsaw.

The usual label emails about production issues, contract negotiations, release schedules and timelines don't go away just because I decided to get a record out this month

As most of the music for the album was improvised last year and played in guitar tunings and even bass tunings (one!) that are not conventional, trying to remember how to play each song was rather a puzzle to start with, but once I'd fathomed them out, I made videos of what I was doing and sent them to the band, and three weeks before the first show, we began rehearsing.

Everyone has day jobs (me too!), so somehow, all seven of us squeezed into a little room in Brighton where we rehearsed a couple of nights a week for three weeks and then drove up to Liverpool and back for our first show at the end of October, leaving home at 7am on gig day and returning at 6am the following day for work.

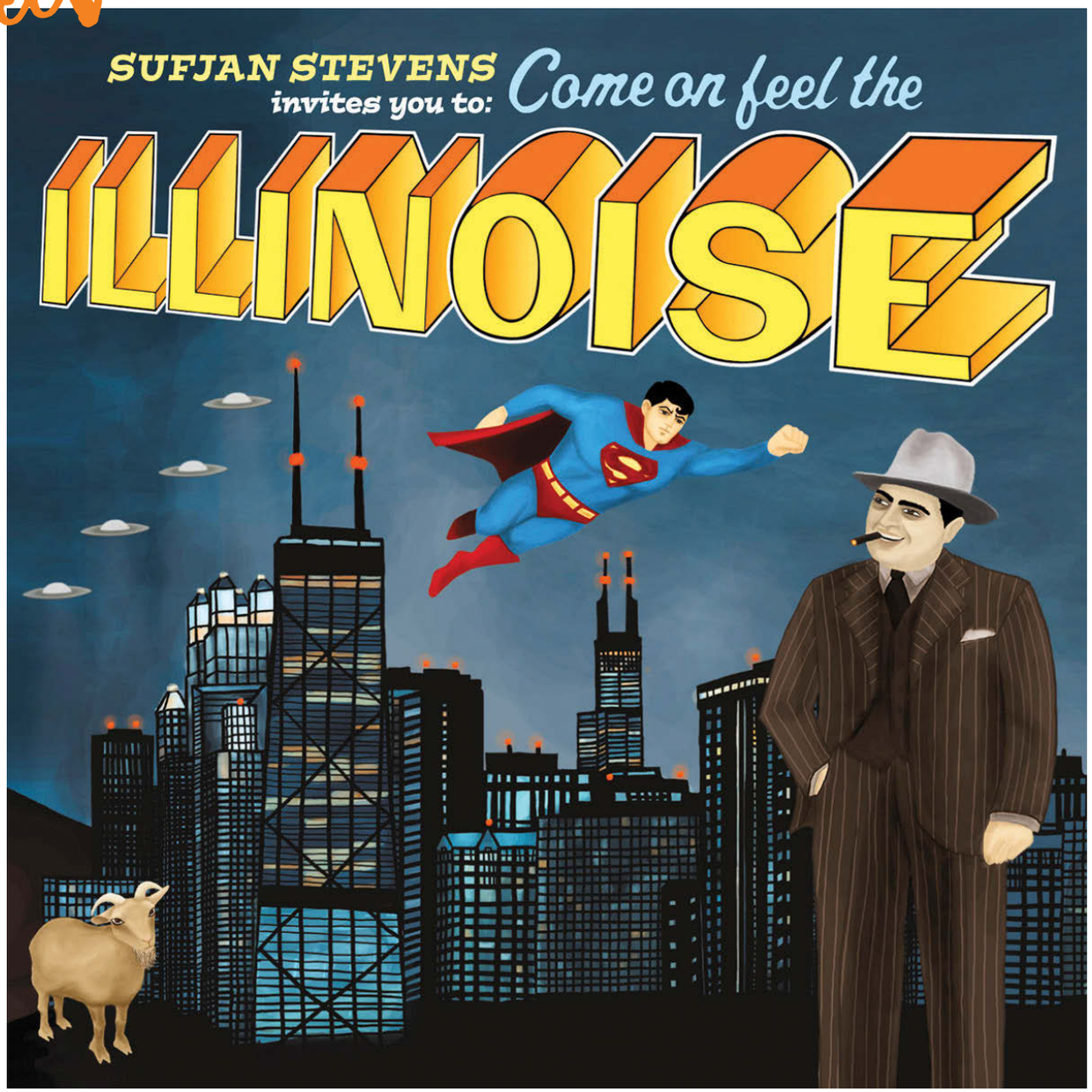
Ah, the memories – of no sleep, motorway food and Red Bull – just keep flooding back. There was such a cool energy with everyone, and the friendships and bonds that were made on that first day of rehearsal have strengthened deeply in a very short space of time… I really feel close to all of these lovely people. It bodes well for the future and for what we may achieve as a live band.

Richie and I go back a long, long way, to the early 80s when we were both in bands on 4AD. And while the music we made back then has certainly been a privilege to be a part of, I can safely say that this is the most fun we've both had making music, and we do certainly deserve that.

By the time you read this, we'll have had our debut album *Ojalá* released and we will have completed our first UK tour, but if you missed it, look out for us next year. We are called Lost Horizons – we will be back with more touring and a second album for sure. ●

SIMON RAYMONDE ***was the bassist and keyboard player in Cocteau Twins and founded the independent record label Bella Union***

The Story Behind The Sleeve



#8 Illinois

Sufjan Stevens

It may have been his fifth studio album, but 2005's *Illinois* was the breakthrough release for instrumental polymath and genre polymorph Sufjan Stevens. It remains his best-known work and musically surpassed its precursor, 2003's *Michigan* (he'd planned to base an album on each of the 50 States, an ambition he's since admitted was "a joke"). Illustrator Divya Srinivasan's cover art, featuring Al Capone and the Chicago skyline, reflects Stevens' historically literate lyrics – referencing figures ranging from Black Hawk and Abraham Lincoln to John Wayne Gacy, Jr. The design also included Superman – according to 1972 State Legislature, Metropolis, Illinois is officially the superhero's hometown. While some copies did go on sale, the artwork was altered to avoid infringing DC Comics' copyright. The November 2005 vinyl release had a balloon sticker in Superman's place, before he was removed altogether; the 10th Anniversary vinyl reissue instead features the Chicago-born Blue Marvel character… officially sanctioned this time.

Now Spinning

Enjoy our pick of the best tracks of the year with this issue's companion beer, the festive Plum Pudding Porter from Bristol's majestic Wiper And True brewery…

1 Star Roving – Slowdive (Dead Oceans)
2 The System Only Dreams In Total Darkness – The National (4AD)
3 In Undertow – Alvvays (Transgressive)
4 Wow – Beck (Virgin EMI)
5 Humble – Kendrick Lamar (Top Dawg Entertainment)
6 Lucid – Kelly Lee Owens (Smalltown Supersound)
7 Shark Smile – Big Thief (Saddle Creek)
8 City Music – Kevin Morby (Dead Oceans)
9 Call The Police – LCD Soundsystem (Columbia/DFA)
10 Pain – The War On Drugs (Atlantic)
11 Josephine – Michael Head & The Red Elastic Band (Violette)
12 New York – St. Vincent (Loma Vista/Caroline)

Monk's Magic

All five of the 10" LPs that legendary pianist Thelonious Monk recorded for Prestige in the early 50s have been dusted down, restored and repressed for a comprehensive new jazz boxset. Out this month, *The Complete Prestige 10-Inch LP Collection* spans 1951 to 1954, with each record detailed in an accompanying book by Robin D G Kelley, author of Monk biog *The Life And Times of An American Original*. Listen out for guest appearances from the equally legendary Art Blakey, Max Roach and Sonny Rollins, the latter jamming with Monk for a full 11 minutes on the track *More Than You Know*.

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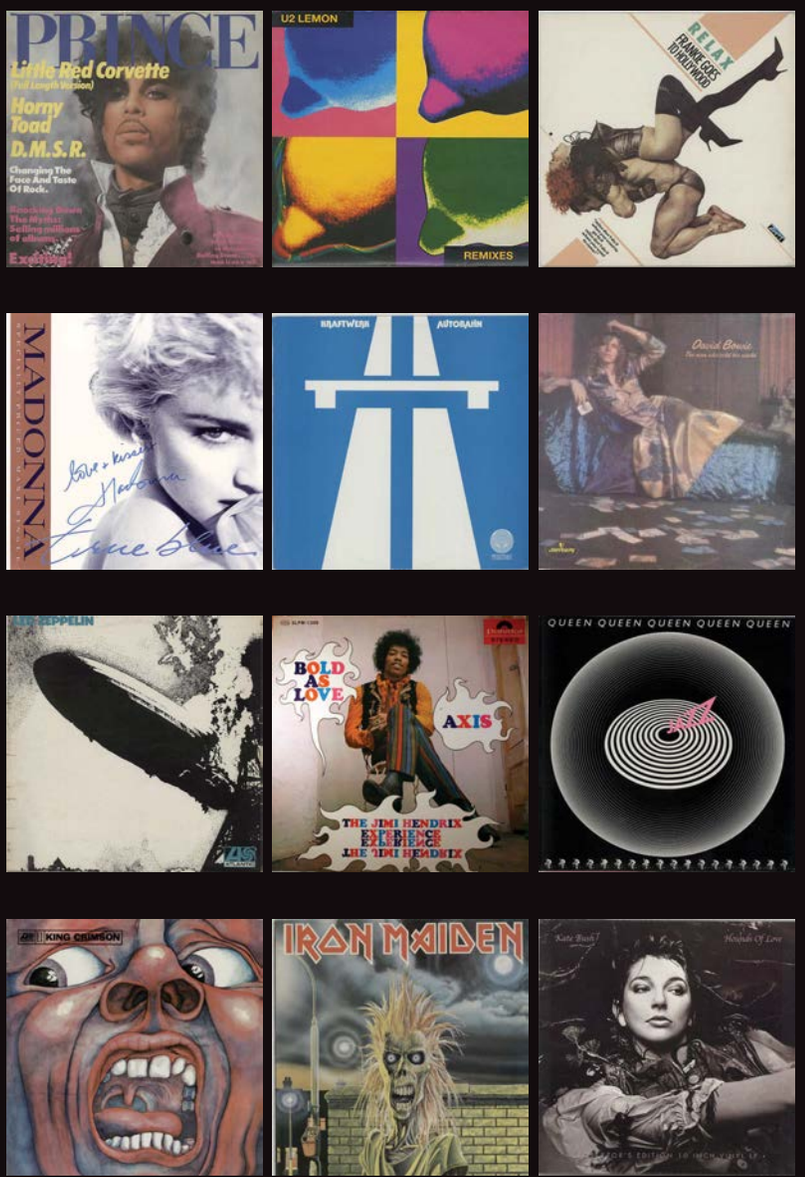

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ALEX LIPINSKI

A talented singer-songwriter who's all for an egalitarian record-shopping experience

Alex Lipinski chose the fitting venue of a series of record shops to debut his new album. To coincide with the release of *Alex* on A Recordings in November, the Weston-super-Mare singer-songwriter played shows at shops including Rough Trade West and Friendly Records in Bristol, as well as a gig in his hometown and another in Berlin.

"I like the sense of community a record shop can offer," says Lipinski, when asked why he enjoys record-shop gigs. "As a collector, I enjoy walking into a shop and not knowing what you might discover. A record shop should be for everyone to enjoy, it shouldn't be selective. I'm not into these too-cool-for-school hipster kind of record shops where the staff look down at you if you buy a certain record, or if you dress a certain way. The kind of shops where the clientele are raving about this new band because the synth is being played by someone's feet. I'm really not into that. Music is for all."

Lipinski, who fronted Phoneys & The Freaks with ex-Oasis guitarist Paul 'Bonehead' Arthurs, has spent time in the US and Berlin and has influences that err towards classic 60s sounds and their 90s reincarnation, Britpop – think The Beatles, Dylan and Oasis. "I grew up in a house where music always seemed to be playing," says Alex who has always worked closely with his older brother Anton, whose label he's releasing this album on. "Mainly, The Beatles, Elvis Presley, 50s/60s rock 'n' roll… basically, my dad's record collection, or various 90s bands, would waft through from my brother's rooms, usually Oasis or The Charlatans.

"We used to have an upright piano in our small hallway by the front door, which someone always seemed to be bashing something out on. Being the youngest sibling, I grew up looking up to my older brother, as he was in a band. I started gigging in pubs when I was 14 and I've been playing ever since. I knew from a young age there was nothing else I was remotely interested in doing."

Lipinski hasn't stopped since, travelling the world with his songs about life and love. The new record leaves you longing for more – and it's best listened to on vinyl. "Listening to music on vinyl is the complete listening experience," says Lipinski. "You're fully engaged from the moment you pull the record out of the sleeve, study the artwork and drop the needle. Vinyl makes every part of the creative process essential. Plus, the recent resurgence in vinyl sales now makes it necessary." Alex runs us through his own setup: "The record player sits in the corner of the front room, it's an old Victorian flat with high ceilings, so the sound travels. The speakers are old, but sound great. The collection began with borrowing some of my dad's or brother's records for a sustained period of time! It's pretty eclectic. There's a solid dose of Dylan, Neil Young, Springsteen, and a sizeable 60s collection. It's built into a healthy size over time, but you always want more!"

'Alex' is out now on vinyl as well as CD and available to download. More info at: www.alexlipinski.co.uk ●

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Rock Lobster

Art-rock and classical merge in the soundtrack to *The Lobster*, Yorgos Lanthimos' Cannes Jury Prize-winning comedy-drama. It gets a first vinyl pressing this month – a collaborative project between Fire Soundtracks and Lakeshore Records – on limited-edition clear vinyl with inserts including, we're told, "a unique animal trading card". The tracklist takes in Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds' *Where The Wild Roses Grow* with Kylie Minogue, alongside classical renditions of Beethoven, Stravinsky and Shostakovich.

FRESH PRESSINGS

U2's 14th studio album, *Songs Of Experience*, is out this month on Island Records and the Deluxe vinyl edition adds *Ordinary Love* (Extraordinary Mix), *Book Of Your Heart* and *Lights Of Home* (St Peter's String Version)… The Pharcyde's *Bizarre Ride II The Pharcyde* gets a 25th Anniversary double-vinyl edition, which will add three 12" singles… Captain's long-awaited new album of modern-day 'sophisti pop', *For Irini*, is to be pressed on heavyweight purple vinyl, and housed in a gatefold sleeve.

YOUR MOST VALUABLE

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RAMONES

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IAN PEEL'S
LINER NOTES

Here's a subject, or rather a vinyl format, which I think deserves much more attention than it gets. Let's shine a long-overdue light on the art of the 10" single…

What was your first 10"? You might love the format and know the answer straight away. Or it's quite possible that you've never bothered with 10" singles, seeing them as neither fish nor flesh – a cumbersome 7" or a chopped down 12". They're the vinyl equivalent of Marmite.

What was my first 10" purchase? After seeing Level 42 for the first time on *The Tube*, I headed out the next day to buy *Something About You* on 12". It had sold out, so I settled for the 10" (with exclusive tracks, as opposed to a remix) instead. I then felt I had no choice but to buy the follow-up single on 10", of course. It's a 'collector thing'.

My favourite purchase from that era was Stephen Duffy's 10"-only double gatefold set released around the time of *I Love You*, but with bespoke artwork, the Dixie remake of *Wednesday Jones* and his other recent hits on Disc Two. It was a 'mini best of', which repositioned the artist perfectly, away from the glam of *Tin Tin* towards a more serious, artful, adult pop.

In the mid 90s, as vinyl was starting to die out, 10" singles were one of the first casualties. One of the last great examples in my collection from this time is 808 State's *Sawnoff Dali*, a two-disc gatefold promo for the group's sixth album, *Don Solaris*.

Designed by Mat Maitland and with sleevenotes by an uncredited Paul Morley, it was possibly the last time a record label spent any serious budget on the 10" and invested in it as an artform.

Come the late 90s and early 2000s, I was reviewing a mountain of vinyl for *DJ* magazine every two weeks and, very occasionally, a 10" would arrive. I still have a couple of examples. *Spacemaker Deluxe* on Indochina by overlooked big-beat pioneers Supercharger in a plain brown, stickered sleeve. And an early release by Osymyso, *Leopard To Lizard*. I'd completely forgotten how this sounded, but a quick trip to Discogs has me putting it under the needle straight away, 20 years later.

> ***It's quite possible that you've never bothered with 10" singles, seeing them as neither fish nor flesh. They're the vinyl equivalent of Marmite***

"It's the kind of track that the term 'mash-up' was invented for, a chaotic audio tug-of-war that sounds like a messed-up interpretation of a theme tune for a 1970s UK sitcom." Thanks, Discogs user 'pipedream'… But by this stage, the 10" seemed lost in a world dominated by 12" white labels, which were soon to be wiped out themselves by downloads and streams.

So when I first started working on The Wolfmen project with ex-Ants Chris Constantinou, Marco Pirroni and Chris Hughes – The Artist Formerly Known As Merrick(!) – I lobbied hard for their first release to be a 10" single. And it worked well; a four-track EP, including a raging cover of Brian Eno's *Needle In The Camel's Eye*, it set their stall perfectly. The embodiment of song and format – and the art of the 10" – said as much about the group as any showcase gig or video ever could. ●

STUDIO SNAPSHOT

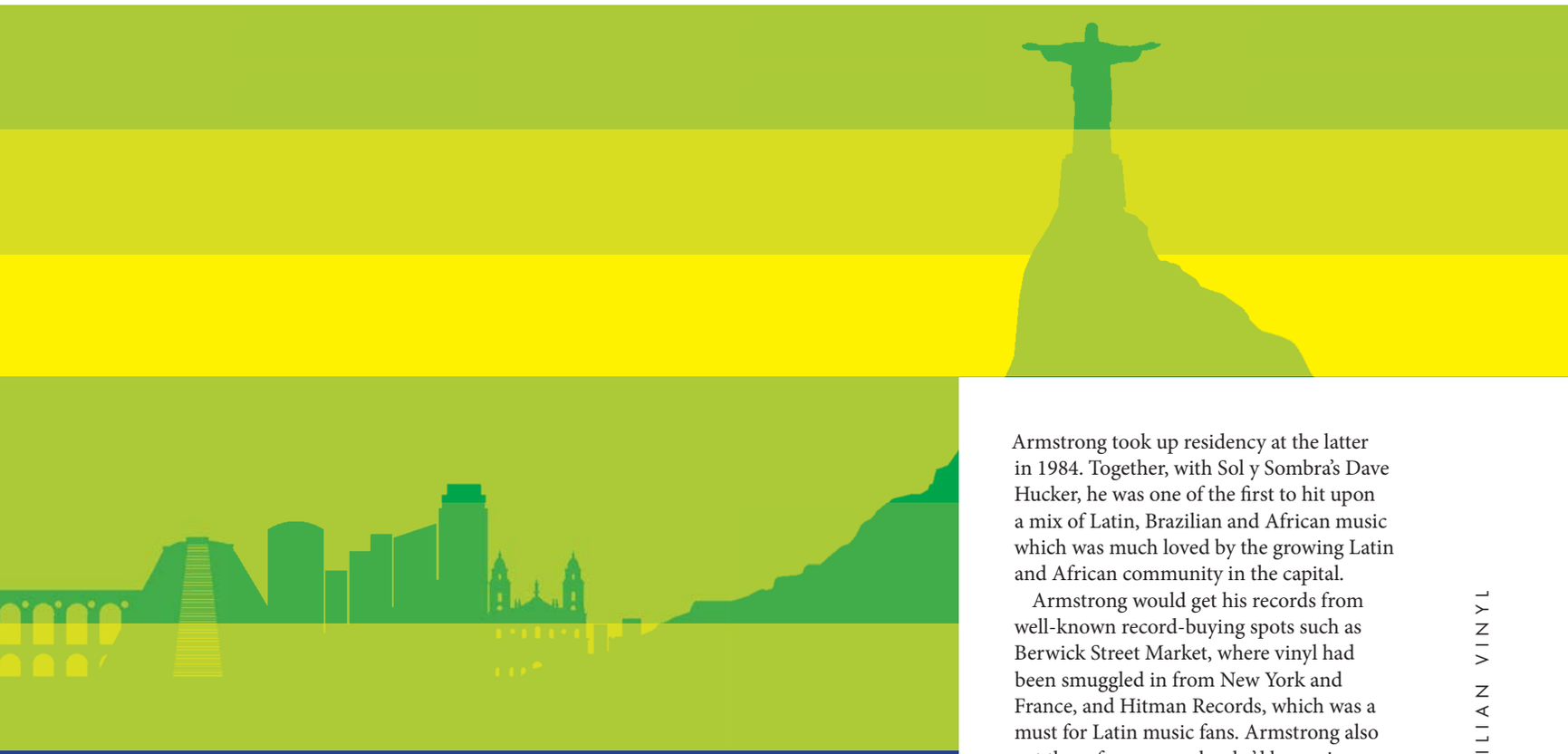
PETE TOWNSHEND

Home studio, Twickenham, 1969

Pete Townshend of The Who, in the recording studio he'd had installed upstairs in his three-storey Georgian townhouse in Twickenham in 1969. This was the year that the band released their fourth album, the hugely ambitious rock opera *Tommy*. Largely composed by Townshend – who, by this time, was not only firmly established in the pantheon of guitar gods, but also a multi-talented instrumentalist – the double album represented a giant leap for the band in terms of their artistic horizons and musical ability. It was also the first time the bandleader had begun to create sophisticated home demos for a project, before presenting his often remarkably evolved arrangements to the band to complete in a pro studio.

Marshall

LONDON'S BRAZILIAN LOVE AFFAIR



The infectious grooves contained in Brazilian vinyl have filled dancefloors around the world for decades. **Russ Slater** explains how a group of UK DJs helped light the touchpaper…

In the summer of 2014, an unlikely figure appeared on Channel 4 News to make an appeal to the British public: "Hey, this is Gilles Peterson, I'm asking you to really dig deep in your record collection or think of someone who might have this record," he began, holding the sleeve to an unfamiliar album in his hands. "This is by José Prates. It doesn't look like much, it's the kind of thing you could find in a car-boot sale isn't it? I'm sure, in fact, I passed through it myself not realising this had the very original version of *Mas Que Nada* by Sérgio Mendes [and] Jorge Ben on it. Incredible record. I just want the vinyl, the original plastic, on Polydor. Really would appreciate it. Look out and you'll make a DJ, an old DJ, a very happy man."

Obviously there are some things that even someone with as many connections as Peterson can struggle to find. In this particular case, he was looking for a copy of José Prates' *Tam… Tam… Tam…!*, a record that lived in relative obscurity for many years, a forgotten relic of Brazilian music. But, as with many records from the 50s through to the 70s, in recent years it has gained extra notoriety, its scarcity and unique long-standing cultural impact inflating its value and making original versions something of a collector's item. This particular search by Gilles Peterson is also symbolic of a unique relationship that formed between Brazilian music and a small group of record collectors and DJs based in London in the 80s and 90s.

SAMBA IN THE STREETS

It's fair to say that Brazilian music had fallen off the radar during the 70s, never really managing to shrug off the easy-listening exotica persona that had been created by artists such as Astrud Gilberto and Carmen Miranda, and the general adoption of 'bossa nova lite' in elevators around the globe. The 80s were going to be different, though. Brazilian music would feed into two new phenomena – world music and the emerging dance-music culture – and it would finally get its dues.

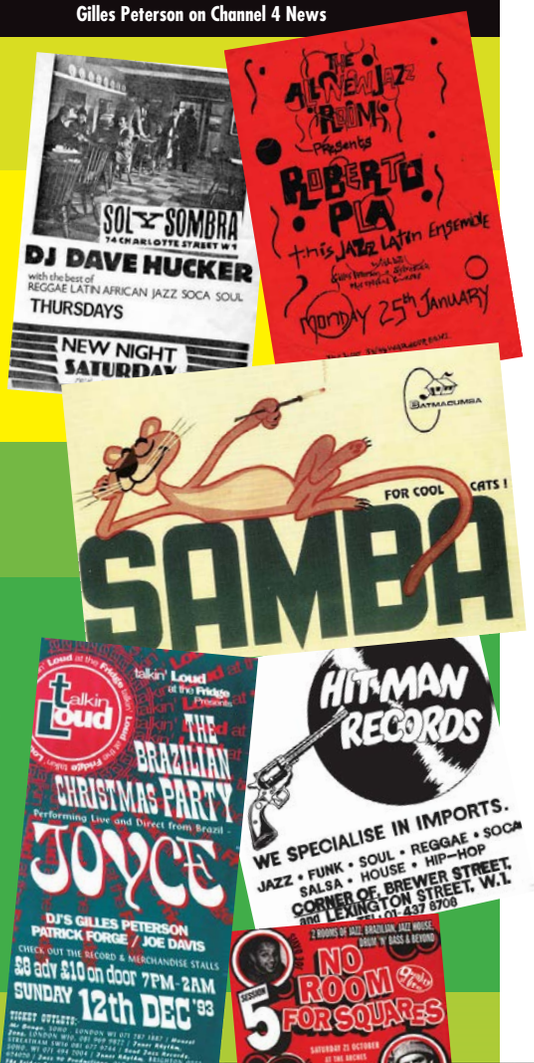
The first few clubs to play Latin American music in London were El Cantino, Sol y Sombra and Bass Clef Jazz Club. John Armstrong took up residency at the latter in 1984. Together, with Sol y Sombra's Dave Hucker, he was one of the first to hit upon a mix of Latin, Brazilian and African music which was much loved by the growing Latin and African community in the capital.

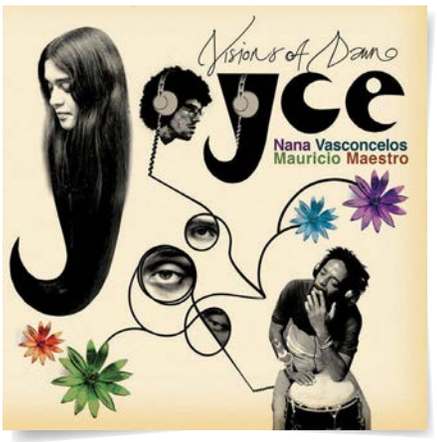
Armstrong would get his records from well-known record-buying spots such as Berwick Street Market, where vinyl had been smuggled in from New York and France, and Hitman Records, which was a must for Latin music fans. Armstrong also got them from a number he'd been given by a local record shop, as he recalls: "I ring this guy called Megatron Import/Export, it's a phone number in Crawley, and he says, 'What do you want?', and I say: 'I'm interested in records', and he says, 'Oh yeah, well my main business is importing motor parts to Brazil'. I suppose the exchange rate was so bad he used to take Jaguar spares and bring back records, and sell them to HMV and so on… He said: 'I can send you some photocopies of catalogues I've got and I'll just charge you 50p each [record], something ridiculous like that'. I went through all these catalogues, everything from Caetano [Veloso] to bizarre country music and I just tried everything. Some of them were awful, some of them were great, but at only 50p per copy, it was worth the risk, because you couldn't find them any other way."

Joe Davis went even further to get his records. He had just left school when a fellow Londoner who'd moved to São

IN THE 1980S, BRAZILIAN MUSIC FED INTO TWO NEW PHENOMENA: WORLD MUSIC AND DANCE-MUSIC CULTURE

Gilles Peterson on Channel 4 News





Paulo and opened up a record shop, Eric Crawford, persuaded him to make a trip in 1986: "He basically made me come to Brazil. He said: 'There's amazing music here'. Everything was extremely cheap. And Brazil had just come out of a dictatorship as well, so there was a booming economy… I would stay in Eric's record shop all night. He would work on his collection and I would go through his library of stock until 5 in the morning discovering music… I sent several hundred records by ship via the post office and came home with 250 [records]." Back in London, Davis sold on his purchases – which focused on what he calls "Brazilian Jazz, psychedelic music, beats, funk, anything that floats my boat" – to record shops, collectors and DJs such as Peterson, and then he got himself prepared for another trip.

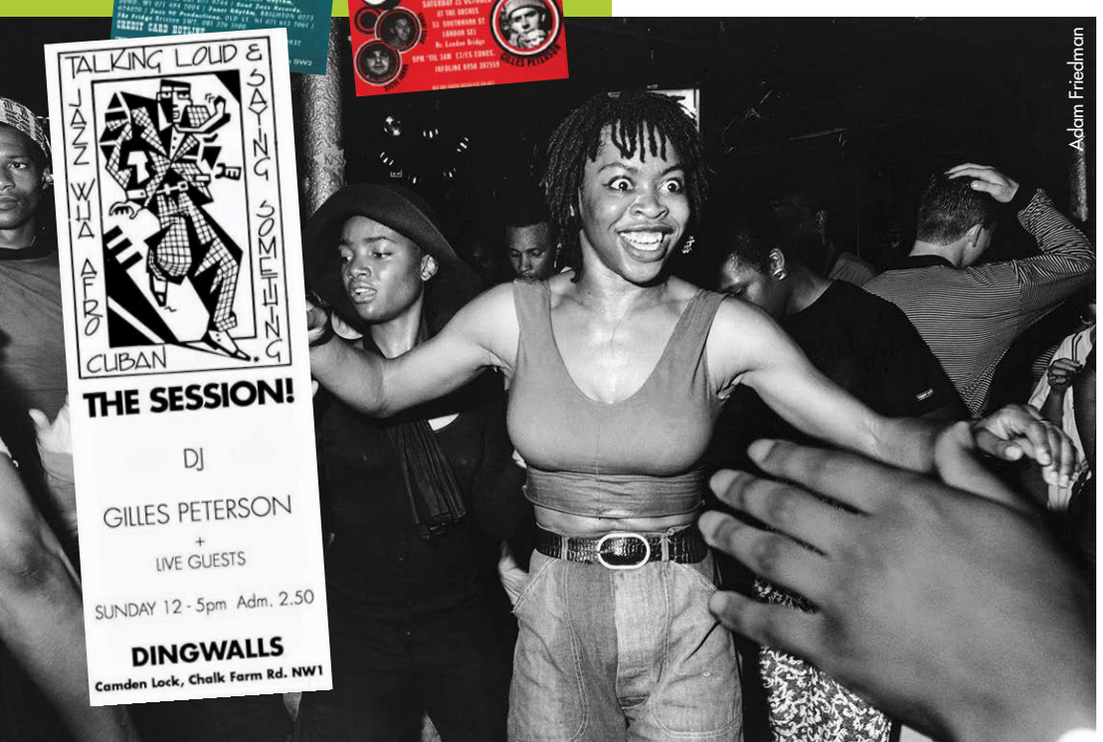
However the records were arriving in London, they were getting picked up by a new generation of DJs – with an eclectic approach to music that saw them playing jazz, soul, funk and Latin sounds to a hedonistic audience ready to dance. This was the beginning of club culture. Paul Murphy and Colin Curtis were among the first DJs to pioneer this blend, but it was when Gilles Peterson showed up on the scene, and especially when he started his Sunday Afternoon slots at Dingwalls with Patrick Forge, that things really started to take off. Thanks to the patronage of *The Face* magazine, as well as Peterson's move into releasing music first with Acid Jazz Records and then shortly after with Talkin' Loud, in the mid 80s, acid jazz – as the scene became known – grew into a national concern. Brazilian music was one of the integral ingredients in the music they were playing. This you can see if you look at the tracklist for the first compilation Peterson ever produced, *Jazz Juice,* in 1985: it was dominated by Airto Moreira, Gilberto Gil and Sérgio Mendes.

DANCE ANTHEMS

Those in the acid-jazz scene, such as Davis and Peterson, loved their Brazilian music with grooves and musical chops, and they gravitated towards artists such as Azymuth, Marcos Valle and Naná Vasconcelos, who all played shows in London in the early 90s. The most memorable occasion for many was the first time that Joyce came to London, to play at a now-defunct Brixton club called the Fridge in 1993. In Brazil, she had been playing to an ageing crowd that had grown up with her music since the 70s, but in London, she walked onstage to a young and hip sold-out audience of 2,000. A year later, Davis and Peterson would put together the *Brazilica!* compilation, which showed how much deeper they had got into the music, with Davis soon after starting Far Out Recordings, a label devoted to Brazilian music, releasing albums by Azymuth, Joyce and Valle, as well as many new artists.

Aside from the Brazilian jazz and bossa nova-tinged music so loved by the acid-jazz crowd, parallel scenes had also emerged in London, and there were different strands of Brazilian music for everyone. As well as playing to migrant Africans and Latinos at the Bass Clef, John Armstrong visited the north of Brazil in 1988, discovering the sounds of lambada and forró, as well as hearing the song *Lambada* at carnival.

I SENT SEVERAL HUNDRED RECORDS BY SHIP VIA THE POST OFFICE AND CAME HOME WITH 250 RECORDS



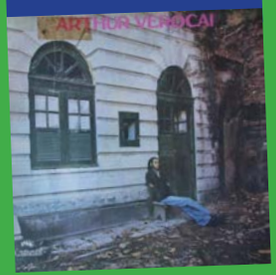
Adam Friedman

5 RARE BRAZILIAN RECORDS

Adam Friedman

Pedro Santos
Krishnanda (1968)
With a unique mix of spiritualism and great grooves, this psychedelic masterpiece has gone from obscurity to being hailed by everyone, including Quantic, Floating Points, Madlib and Gilles Peterson. Created by virtuoso percussionist and composer Santos, even its cover was way ahead of its time.
Originally on CBS Records International/ reissued by Mr Bongo

Arthur Verocai
Arthur Verocai (1972)
In 1972, Arthur Verocai poured his heart into his debut, crafting an orchestral pop epic of sublime melodies and heartfelt vocals. It flopped; Verocai gave up on a solo career. In the 2000s, a bunch of US collectors re-released the record, even helping arrange for Verocai to debut it live.
Originally on Continental Records/reissued by Luv N' Haight (US), Mr Bongo (UK)



Lula Côrtes e Zé Ramalho
Paêbirú (1975)
This album would be highly sought after even if 700 of the original 1,000 copies hadn't been destroyed by a flood. As it is, this sublime mix of pastoral folk, north-eastern Brazilian instrumentation and mysticism is officially the most expensive Brazilian vinyl of all time, with one copy going for close to £1,000.
Originally on Rozenblit/reissued by Mr Bongo

Tim Maia
Racional Vol. 1 (1975)
Maia is the No. 1 voice of soul in Brazil, without question. He's also known for joining a cult in the 70s and extolling their principles through the medium of funk. When he found out the cult's leader had a dark side, he binned all the records, making this very rare.
Originally on Seroma/reissued on CD by Trama

José Prates
Tam... Tam... Tam...! (1958)
Revered for the track *Nãnã Imborô*, whose melody was famously used by Jorge Ben in *Mas Que Nada*, this album is also unique for being one of the first records to feature heavy Afro-Brazilian influences. The price has rocketed since Peterson said he wanted a copy.
Originally on Polydor/reissued on Trunk Records

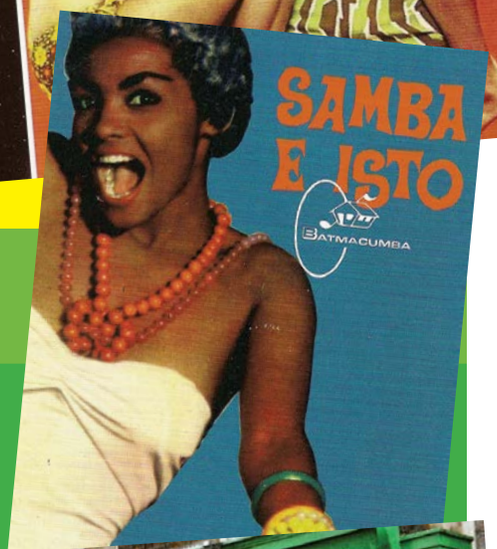
The next year, the song became a huge summer anthem in the UK. For Armstrong, the timing was perfect as he'd just agreed to start a lambada night with a new organisation called Brazilian Contemporary Arts. On their opening night, there were queues around the block. "We were the first people to do dance classes in any club in the country in the way that it's now become the cheesy thing," remembers Armstrong. "We did lambada and forró lessons in the club. We had mostly Brazilians dancing forró downstairs and a mixture of Brazilians and Anglos upstairs dancing lambada."

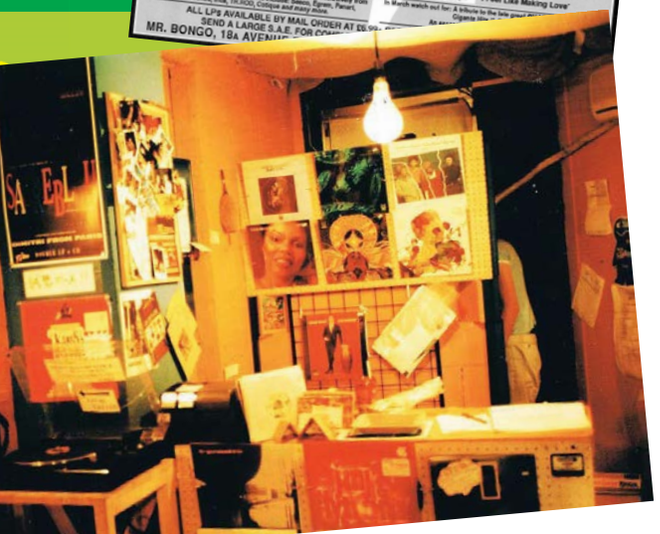
Through the 80s and 90s, Brazilian Contemporary Arts would become an institution for Brazilian culture, putting on shows by major Brazilian artists culminating in an all-star line-up of Gilberto Gil, Caetano Veloso, Gal Costa, Chico Buarque and Elza Soares for one show at the Royal Albert Hall in 1999.

DJ Cliffy was a late arrival to the scene. After starting out DJing in Bristol, he had spent six months in Brazil and came back a changed man, starting a Brazilian-themed night called Bat Macumba at the ICA in 1997. Enthralled by the new music coming out of Brazil, he wanted to do something different, creating a unique night that included short films alongside live music and DJs. "The first night we ever did was absolutely mad," remembers Cliffy. "The ICA was not used to running club nights and they forgot to take the tickets off people as they went in… loads of Brazilians were handing their tickets through the windows to people outside who couldn't get in. Although they had a limit of 350 people, we had over 700 in on the night. For the first few years, we had queues down The Mall."

After Joe Davis had taken a break from digging to start a record label, Cliffy was quick to fill his shoes: "After my first trip ▶

Gilles Peterson's compilations championed Brazilian sounds in the 80s and 90s





in 1994, I sold a few records [and] I quickly realised that with a bit of extra digging, records could cover all my travel costs. Each time I went back, I bought a few extra copies for DJs I knew. At the peak, I was going to Brazil eight times a year, almost every six weeks… Soon, I was selling to Patrick Forge, Nicola Conte, Jazzanova, Kyoto Jazz Massive, Gilles Peterson and countless others. It was still pre-downloads, so people would ring me up and I would play tracks down the phone." Through a contact, he even had clients in Japan, where the thirst for Brazilian music was just as strong as in London.

VIVA VINYL

Those early days of digging in Brazil seem so much more idyllic than today, and it's perhaps no wonder that Peterson is even wondering if that elusive *Tam… Tam… Tam…!* record passed through his fingers. "When I first went [to Brazil], I found Os Ipanemas, Bossa Três' *Em Forma!*, Moacir Santos' *Coisas*, Pedro Santos' [*Krishnanda*], many, many LPs," remembers Davis of some of the rare records he encountered easily on that first trip.

Luckily, many of them are being reissued through labels such as Far Out Recordings, Mr Bongo and Soul Jazz Records, all UK record labels keeping the connection with Brazil alive and making records that even collectors like Peterson can't find available

to the public again. Speaking to Mr Bongo's David Buttle, he sees there being no end to the albums and artists that could be released: "There are still tons of records to be reissued, like Amado Maita… *Transa* [by Caetano Veloso]," he tells me. "And [there's] always new ones to discover, like Vozes De Bronze [who released the obscure *Populário* in 1974], especially the [music of] Afro Brazil is being discovered."

As for Peterson, well he eventually got a copy of *Tam… Tam… Tam…!*, from an American collector for $2,000. "I'm not usually a big spender," he says. "I might spend a couple of hundred pounds – which I know is still a lot of money – but I'm not like some of those northern-soul collectors." And where is the record now? "I've got no idea where I've put it! I know I put it somewhere safe." ●

UK RECORD LABELS ARE REISSUING BRAZILIAN RARITIES, KEEPING THE CONNECTION WITH THE MUSIC ALIVE

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PLAYING THE LONG GAME

Giacomo Lee looks at the rise of videogame soundtracks on vinyl, and the passionate indie labels bringing both new and ambitious and old retro sounds to wax. Read on, Player One…

Sonic Mania **is the vinyl-only soundtrack to a new release in Sega's mega-successful viedogame series**

In honour of 2017 being the 25th anniversary of the long-running *Sonic The Hedgehog* series, game legends Sega decided to commemorate the blue speedster's quarter-century lap with the fanfare you'd expect from a multinational game producer. There was an anniversary event in America, where not one but two new games were announced. Japan gave the masses a *Sonic*-themed cafe. Most unique, though, was the vinyl-only release Sega published in collaboration with relative upstarts from the UK, Data Discs.

Summer 2017 saw the label exclusively put out the score to one of the new games announced at the anniversary event, *Sonic Mania*. The release was the latest in Data Discs' impressive catalogue of game soundtracks on wax, and also the most modern. Previous releases by the London-based label have exhibited a dedication to the childhood sounds of start menus and gameplay action, taking the melodies of 80s and 90s classics into a physical format far removed from the games cartridges of vintage consoles.

"We handle every aspect of the label in-house," explains Data Discs' founder, Jamie Crook. "For example, we have our own mastering studio in South East London. The music we choose also has to work as a standalone album in some way – it's certainly not the case that every game deserves a soundtrack release."

Data Discs' first 12" was the music to an older Sega release, 1991's beat-'em-up romp *Streets Of Rage*, which Crook describes as "some of the most influential and important game music ever made".

The *Streets Of Rage* series has seen three LP releases on Data Discs since 2015, a perfect time capsule of sorts of 90s dance music, with their various shades of house ranging from acid to funky. The third volume, re-released this year, is the finest; originally from 1994, its harsh echoes can be heard on more recent, equally unrelenting records, such as Daft Punk's *Human After All* and the debut Justice LP.

Much of the music to *Streets Of Rage* was put together by Yuzo Koshiro, a composer of countless Japanese videogame scores, alongside Motohiro Kawashima, who began contributing tracks to the project from the second instalment onwards.

The duo joined forces again for Sega's ninja-themed *Shinobi*, another series revisited by Data Discs across two lovingly presented releases. The success of the music to both games saw Koshiro and Kawashima reunite in 2017 to perform their soundtracks live for the very first time, in both LA and London. Once again, game music found itself becoming accessible from outside of the console, with legendary London nightclub Fabric having been the apt host of choice for the performing of these dance classics.

Influential game soundtrack composers Yuzo Koshiro and Motohiro Kawashima

Sugiuru Saito, Red Bull Studios, Tokyo

GAMEPLAY SOUNDS ON VINYL

Available to play on your turntable now, these are the key tracks from over three decades of classic gaming soundtracks…

KNOCK KNOCK
Artist Scattle
Album *Hotline Miami*
Label Laced Records, 2013
A perfect example of the Hotline Miami synthwave sound, which Danny Kelleher of Laced defines as 80s kitsch, but "filtered through a woozy, druggy haze".

Ship To Shore's vinyl release of the music from cult 80s Konami game, *Snatcher*

HULA HOOP
Artist Keiichi Suzuki and Hirokazu Tanaka
Album *MOTHER 2*
Label Ship To Shore Phono Co., 2016
More of an alien transmission than an example of game music, this instrumental from 1994 goes on to channel some spooky trip-hop in its closing minutes.

IMPACT OF THE INDIES

The release of vintage game music on wax doesn't extend just to niche distributors such as Data Discs, but also in Crook's view "passionate indie labels who are willing to take a chance and put in the work". One such example is US label Ship To Shore Phono Co., best known for re-releasing cult 80s film soundtracks. In 2017, the label put out the music to cyberpunk sci-fi *Snatcher*, a game originally released by Konami in 1988 with music made by an anonymous collective of audio technicians employed by the company. What's surprising is how the work of Konami Kukeiha Club, as they were known, made it onto wax in the first place. "It was a lot of fun to play through the game and then record and sequence everything myself!" explains Ship To Shore owner, Aaron Hamel. "It was a lot of work, but I think the end product is one of our best overall packages."

This lo-fi method of preserving *Snatcher*'s sounds for future posterity hasn't affected the music one bit; each moody sax note and surprisingly forward-thinking use of glitchy beats can be heard, crystal clear. Easier to transfer to vinyl, no doubt, were the scores to quirky Nintendo role-player series *MOTHER*, composed by Keiichi Suzuki and Hirokazu Tanaka between 1989 and 1994, as released by Sony in Japan on various CDs. The second volume on Ship To Shore is the standout, with its collection of dark avant-garde pieces rubbing shoulders with catchy hoedowns and occasional techno.

Another name that's turned its sights to the gaming realm is Ghost Ramp, the record label co-run by Patrick McDermott of label collective Omnian Music Group. Unlike previously mentioned LPs, though, soundtracks on Ghost Ramp originate from current indie games on the market. McDermott says this was a conscious move by the label. "I really prefer working with current composers," he explains, "as it's fun for me to work with people that are actively changing the game-music landscape in real time."

One of these benchmarks in the modern scenario is Danny Baranowsky's score to 2015's *Crypt Of The Necrodancer*, which McDermott describes as "an incredible score for a very music-centric game". The game is unique for being a maze-based role-player where actions must be carried out on the beat of the music, and Baranowsky's electronic score is an obvious ode to the arcade dancing games where this feature originated.

Data Disc's release of the *Revenge Of Shinobi* game music

Crypt Of The Necrodancer, on Ghost Ramp

THE 80S CULT OF HOTLINE MIAMI

The most influential game soundtrack of this decade has to be the music to a title in which a killer runs around in a chicken mask. Released by Devolver Games, *Hotline Miami* is best described as the console equivalent of cult film *Drive*, which was released only one year before the game's 2012 debut. Game and movie both share a love of aesthetic gangster-upon-gangster violence, idiosyncratic mask-and-jacket combos, plus music from the 1980s. *Hotline Miami* came just as the

HOTLINE MIAMI IS THE CONSOLE EQUIVALENT OF THE CULT FILM DRIVE

synthwave movement led by acts such as Kavinsky was legitimised by the *Drive* soundtrack, with its own music full of that genre's take on 80s synths set to modern beats. The game, though, has arguably done more to popularise the synthwave scene, much like Daft Punk did with 80s-tinged IDM back in the mid-00s – a period when, lest we forget, the legendary French duo released their own fetishistic ode to masks, jackets and over-elaborate deaths in *Electroma*, their strange art flick from 2006.

"*Hotline Miami* was all about great taste and great timing," explains Kelleher, who released its music on triple vinyl through Laced Records. "The game came out in 2012 when, you could argue, there was a real flourishing of experimental electronica online around platforms like SoundCloud, so its soundtrack effectively served as a carefully curated playlist of some of the best underground music around at the time."

Turning back to cinema once more, one can find further proof of *Hotline Miami*'s reach when the trailer for recent Marvel movie *Thor: Ragnarok* featured a tune originally used in the game's sequel, *In The Face Of Evil*, by US trio Magic Sword.

Hotline Miami 2: Wrong Number, as the 2015 follow-up was called, used plenty of tracks in the vein of Magic Sword's: new music that "leans into the retro trappings of synthwave" according to Jon Gibson, one of the founders of iam8bit, the game-merch company behind its vinyl release. "It's undoubtedly 80s-influenced atmospheric tuneage."

INGA RASEN
Artist Yuzo Koshiro
Album *Streets Of Rage 3*
Label Data Discs, 2017
Dark and frantic sounds such as this not only anticipated German trance music, but also the gabber sounds of early Squarepusher and the 90s IDM scene.

Kelleher concurs on the 80s influence. "The tracks they picked vibed perfectly with the visual aesthetic of the game, which paid homage to *Drive*, while adding a heavy dose of neon-soaked 80s kitsch. That combination was so powerful that there are fans of the *Hotline Miami* aesthetic who haven't even played the game!"

HE'S MY DAD
Artist Widdly 2 Diddly
Album *LISA*
Label Ghost Ramp, 2016
The two *LISA* game soundtracks work best when America's Widdly 2 Diddly ditches the synthwave and aims straight for the emotional jugular. This minimal piece from *Lisa: The Joyful*, for example, is coloured with halcyon chimes and bright pipes.

Laced Records released the music for *Hotline Miami* on triple vinyl

Nobuo Uematsu, composer of the *Final Fantasy* game music, at Abbey Road Studios

A FLEETING DREAM
Artist Nobuo Uematsu
Album *Final Fantasy Vinyls*
Label Square Enix, 2012
Composed for 2001's *Final Fantasy X*, this track shows Uematsu's knack for a sublime and elegiac melody remained as strong as it was on the early games.

UEMATSU AND THE SOUNDS OF FINAL FANTASY

The catalogue of Laced Records is also associated with another modern game-music touchstone, including as it does two tribute LPs of music to the classic *Final Fantasy* series. The original compositions by Nobuo Uematsu arguably lent gaming music credibility from the 90s onwards, when the series became a sucessful worldwide phenomenon.

"It's no secret why music from *Final Fantasy* is loved by fans all over the world: the tracks almost always feature wonderful, memorable melodies," Kelleher contends. "From the earliest games in the 1980s, technological limitations, together with the pacing and the levels of interactivity in the game, meant that Uematsu had to create strong, direct melodies to carry the player along."

The original music first came to vinyl in 2012, via a rare boxset of selections from legendary game company Square Enix. In 2016, Laced Records pressed reinterpretations of tracks by the London Symphony and Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestras, with both albums mastered at Abbey Road studios under the direct supervision of Uematsu himself.

"People love *Final Fantasy* games for their worlds and characters," Kelleher says. "It helps that a lot of the core themes of the games are universal, like love, loss, growing up. Uematsu's music is so central to those games, it's pretty much a character by itself."

FROM VIDEO TO VINYL

The popularity of *Final Fantasy* has led us to today's reverence of videogame scores. But what about the demand for such music on vinyl? Aaron Hamel thinks it all stems from gamers' desire for a physical product.

"Before our *MOTHER* LP, what physical merchandise was there for that series in the West?" he points out. "Fans of these sort of niche things are looking for a tangible piece of memorabilia."

McDermott of Ghost Ramp agrees on this importance of the 'tangible'. "When we all grew up," he recollects, "the games box meant so much. Finding that poster in a classic Sega game or carrying a user manual to school – that tactile element is impossible to replace, and people miss that. Vinyl offers fans a collectible keepsake as well as a form of musical consumption."

Gibson of LA's iam8bit has the last word on the whole phenomenon. "It's really shitty when someone qualifies these scores as 'video game music'," he says. "You don't hear people discounting John Williams because he's making music for movies. It doesn't matter that it's from a videogame – what matters is that it's damn good.

"And with vinyl, you get to hold the music in your hands. You are a human instrument, integral to its playback. And when you listen, you see visions of Neo Tokyo and robots and telekinetic mohawk awesomeness. It's transportive, and the portal is wax – goddamn vinyl!" ●

Suguru Saito, Red Bull Studios, Tokyo

The Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, recording for the *Final Fantasy* series

BALLOON TRIP
(Arrange Version)
Artist Hirokazu Tanaka v Yoshihiro Kunimoto
Album *Famicom Music*
Label G.M.O. Records, 1986
Yet to be re-released is this sparkling LP of Nintendo soundtracks. Kunimoto's remix of a track from 1984 game *Balloon Fight* is part calypso, part chiptune, riding a skittish beat that hasn't dated one bit.

All Round Superior Sound

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THE TOP 100 ALBUMS OF 2017

LLV's panel of industry experts sorts through 2017's spectacular solo efforts, medieval concept albums, triumphant comebacks and mid-career highs

As another year draws to a close, we turn our attention to making sense of the avalanche of new albums released over the past 12 months on vinyl. Plenty of so-called experts will tell you that the music industry is in a creative slump, with no great new music emerging to hold a candle to the icons of the past clogging up our record-shop shelves. We beg to differ, so we assembled an all-star panel of music-loving experts from every corner of the industry. Doing our best to be democratic, we asked 35 label bosses, record-shop owners, musicians, festival founders, journos, and PR types to each name their 20 favourite new releases of the year, giving each one a point, and then ranked the results into a Top 100 of essential records – in order of votes received. If diversity is a sign of strength in depth, then our industry in 2017 is in rude health – no narrow echo chamber here. Our experts picked 310 different releases from all kinds of bands, solo artists and genres. No doubt your opinions will differ from those of our panel – but inarguably, this year has seen some incredible new music made. Read on and find out how many of the Top 100 you've got…

THE PANEL

Iain Aitchison (Longwell Records), Owen Bailey (*LLV* writer), Laura Barton (*LLV* writer), Dan Biggane (*Classic Pop* magazine), Matthew Bradshaw (Jumbo Records), Glen Bushell (991.com), Craig Evans (Flying Vinyl), Tom Friend (Friendly Records), Steve Harnell (*Classic Pop* magazine), Giacomo Lee (*LLV* writer), Duncan Jordan (independent music PR), Annette Lee (4AD), Sarah Lowe (Fifth Avenue PR), Elspeth Merry (Island Records), Rupert Morrison (Drift Record Shop), Grant Nicholas (Feeder), Richard Onslow (South Records), Mark O'Shaughnessy (Resolution Records), Jennifer Otter Bickerdike (author), Megan Page (Record Store Day), Chris Parkin (*LLV* writer), Ian Peel (*LLV* founder), Kate Price (Stereo Sanctity), Russ Slater (*LLV* writer), Carl Smithson (Truck Store), Murray Stassen (*LLV* writer), Simon Taffe (End Of The Road Festival) Gary Tipp (*LLV* writer), Ashli Todd (Spillers), Jane Unwin (Banquet Records), Gary Walker (*LLV* editor), Wyndham Wallace (*LLV* writer), Ed Warren (Cliffs), Laura Williams (*LLV* writer), Ben Wardle (*LLV* writer)

310
TOTAL NUMBER OF ALBUMS NOMINATED BY OUR PANEL OF 35

100
Loyle Carner
YESTERDAY'S GONE
Virgin EMI

99
Willie J Healey
PEOPLE AND THEIR DOGS
Columbia

98
J Hus
COMMON SENSE
Black Butter

97
John Moreland
BIG BAD LUV
4AD

96
Spoon
HOT THOUGHTS
Matador

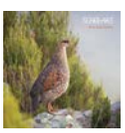
95
Lost Horizons
OJALÁ
Bella Union

94
The Killers
WONDERFUL WONDERFUL
Island

93
Susanne Sundfør
MUSIC FOR PEOPLE IN TROUBLE
Bella Union

92
Juana Molina
HALO
Crammed Discs

91
Kamasi Washington
HARMONY OF DIFFERENCE
Young Turks



90
Scholars
ARTS AND GRAFTS
Banquet

89
Lorde
MELODRAMA
Virgin EMI

88
Jesca Hoop
MEMORIES ARE NOW
Sub Pop

87
The Mountain Goats
GOTHS
Merge

86
Public Service Broadcasting
EVERY VALLEY
Play It Again Sam

85
Ryuichi Sakamoto
ASYNC
Milan

84
Rag'N' Bone Man
HUMAN
Columbia

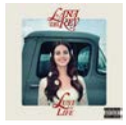
83
Peter Perrett
HOW THE WEST WAS WON
Domino

82
Neil Young
HITCHHIKER
Reprise

81
Kelela
TAKE ME APART
Warp

80
Moses Sumney
AROMANTICISM
Jagjaguwar

79
Gorillaz
HUMANZ
Parlophone



78
Lana Del Rey
LUST FOR LIFE
Polydor

77
Mark Lanegan
GARGOYLE
Heavenly

76
Girl Ray
EARL GREY
Moshi Moshi

75
Giggs
WAMP 2 DEM
Universal

74
Mount Kimbie
LOVE WHAT SURVIVES
Warp

73
Michael Chapman
50
Paradise Of Bachelors

72
Thurston Moore
ROCK N ROLL CONSCIOUSNESS
Caroline International

71
UNKLE
THE ROAD: PART 1
Songs For The Def

70
Thee Oh Sees
ORC
Castle Face

69
Endless Boogie
VIBE KILLER
No Quarter

68
Dirty Projectors
DIRTY PROJECTORS
Domino

67
Cut Copy
HAIKU FROM ZERO
Capitol

66
Chris Stapleton
FROM A ROOM: VOL 1
Decca

65
Bonobo
MIGRATION
Ninja Tune

64
BNQT
VOLUME 1
Bella Union

63
Bing & Ruth
NO HOME OF THE MIND
4AD

62
BadBad NotGood
IV
Innovative Leisure

61
Foo Fighters
CONCRETE AND GOLD
RCA

60
Flyte
THE LOVED ONES
Island

59
The Charlatans
DIFFERENT DAYS
BMG

58
Mount Eerie
A CROW LOOKED AT ME
P.W. Elverum & Sun

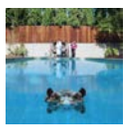
57
alt-J
RELAXER
Atlantic

56
Wiley
GODFATHER
CTA Records

55
Alison Moyet
OTHER
Cooking Vinyl

54
Aimee Mann
MENTAL ILLNESS
SuperEgo

53
Wolf Alice
VISIONS OF A LIFE
Dirty Hit



52
Sparks
HIPPOPOTAMUS
BMG

51
Soulwax
FROM DEEWEE
PIAS

MY FAVOURITE ALBUM

GRANT NICHOLAS, FEEDER
ARCADE FIRE, EVERYTHING NOW

"I've been a fan of Arcade Fire for many years now, as I really like their sound and live chemistry. They're a band I connect with musically and they have also managed to experiment and evolve, but ultimately keep their character and identity. They have so many influences, but manage to make it their own. *Everything Now* has an interesting electronic and almost pop sensibility to it, but still has songs that can fill stadiums."

49 Julie Byrne
NOT EVEN HAPPINESS
BASIN ROCK

The New York folk singer fired an early salvo in the Album Of The Year stakes with a wonderfully becalming record, lavished with soothing fingerpicked guitar, hushed vocals and subtle orchestration. It was one of the most sedate listens of the year – a beautiful antidote to the January blues.

47 Everything Everything
A FEVER DREAM
RCA

Manchester's Everything Everything tackled the world's problems with eloquent synth-pop on their fourth album, bombarding us with soaring choruses and delivering bad news in the most euphoric style.

45 Brand New
SCIENCE FICTION
PROCRASTINATE MUSIC TRAITORS

Released suddenly, in enigmatic fashion, *Science Fiction* saw the Long Island band revisit the multiple guises they've adopted over the years – pop-punk, emo and alt-rock among them – culminating in a virtuosic, guitar-centric return to form that looks set to be a fond farewell.

43 Hiss Golden Messenger
HALLELUJAH ANYHOW
MERGE

"I've never been afraid of darkness/ It's just a different kind of light", sang MC Taylor on opener *Jenny Of The Roses*. It was an album about seeking hope in the darkness – a poignant message for Americans in 2017.

50 Perfume Genius
NO SHAPE
MATADOR

Album four found Mike Hadreas more comfortable in his own skin after the self medication and soul searching of his previous work and the utterly brilliant, menacing anthem *Queen* from 2014's *Too Bright*. On *No Shape*, he reflected on new-found stability and paid tribute to his partner. Producer Blake Mills played a blinder, too.

48 Jake Xerxes Fussell
WHAT IN THE NATURAL WORLD
PARADISE OF BACHELORS

The only album of covers in our list was also one of the most beautiful. Fussell ranges from *The Bells Of Rhymney* to Lil McClintock's *Furniture Man*, imbuing everything with his Southern storyteller's voice and dextrous fingerpicking.

46 The Moonlandingz
INTERPLANETARY CLASS CLASSICS
TRANSGRESSIVE

Pushing the weirdness stakes to the limit, this collaboration between Fat White Family and Eccentronic Research Council members was a dizzying gothic stomp calling on guests including Yoko Ono and the cowboy from the Village People.

44 Depeche Mode
SPIRIT
COLUMBIA

Existential disillusionment flowed through the Mode's 14th album. After the earnest plea of first single *Where's The Revolution*, Martin Gore summed up the prevailing mood on final track *Fail*: "We're fucked".

42 Sampha
PROCESS
YOUNG TURKS

Sampha Sisay added the 2017 Hyundai Mercury Prize to a musical CV bulging with critical acclaim. This beautiful, cathartic debut record saw the 29-year-old Londoner carve out his own R&B niche, reflecting heavily on the death of his mother from cancer.

MY FAVOURITE ALBUM

ASHLI TODD, SPILLERS CARDIFF
JOHN MURRY, A SHORT HISTORY OF DECAY

"This is music to save souls. Every single line packs a punch and resonates long after listening. Murry's not afraid to meet bleak face-on, and he's ready to cut through the mess with humour and faith. If you're lucky enough to have sailed through 2017 unscathed and still feel upbeat (good for you) you probably don't need this album, but if you haven't, it has the cathartic power to heal and restore. Thank you John Murry (and your studio and live band)."

BY NATION

41 James Holden & The Animal Spirits

THE ANIMAL SPIRITS

BORDER COMMUNITY

An album of mind-expanding space jazz that was recorded live with a band including synth wizard Etienne Jaumet and RocketNumberNine's Tom Page. A polyrhythmic web of electronics, drums and brass.

39 Idles

BRUTALISM

BALLEY RECORDS

Furious, laugh-out-loud hilarious and downright Brutal, the Bristol punks' debut was a revolutionary blast that trained its guns on the destruction of the NHS, Tory cronyism and the death of frontman Joe Talbot's mother. If this is what it means to be punk in 2017, we like it.

37 Aldous Harding

PARTY

4AD

A rare talent who left audiences in rapt silence during live performances earlier this year, New Zealander Harding's sophomore album, produced by John Parish, gave notice of a fragile, kaleidoscopic talent with an utterly distinctive voice.

35 Sleaford Mods

ENGLISH TAPAS

ROUGH TRADE

The Mods' first album for Rough Trade took aim at broken Britain in all its mid-Brexit glory. Jason Williamson's East Midlands jackhammer vocal rips through *Army Nights*, *Drayton Manored*, *Messy Anywhere* and *Carlton Touts*, each a sharp-witted observation on the grim futility of it all.

33 Ride

WEATHER DIARIES

WICHITA RECORDINGS

The list's first shoegaze reunion album, within 30 seconds of driving opening track *Lannoy Point*, it was clear *Weather Diaries* was going to be a triumph. It was both timelessly Ride and hauled into the present day thanks to the production work of Erol Alkan.

31 Broken Social Scene

HUG OF THUNDER

CITY SLANG

This celebratory set ended a lengthy exile for the 15-strong Canadian cult. A first album in seven years, it also saw Feist return to the family. Nimbly traversing genres, it was a euphoric statement – with the swoonsome *Skyline* a standout.

40 Baxter Dury

PRINCE OF TEARS

HEAVENLY

The surreal disco-tinged opening track, *Miami*, set us up for an intoxicating album with varied tone and scope. Check out the collaboration with Sleaford Mods' Jason Williamson on *Almond Milk*. An enthralling record from start to finish.

38 Grandaddy

LAST PLACE

COLUMBIA

We were among those who gleefully threw their trucker caps into the air at news of the indie slacker kings' first album in 11 years. It was an endearing work of fuzzy guitars, arpeggiating synths and melodies that soar; oscillating between quiet resignation and arms-aloft lo-fi splendour.

36 The Afghan Whigs

IN SPADES

SUB POP

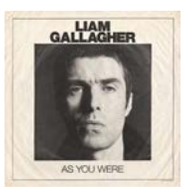
Their first full-band album since 1996's *Black Love* reminded the music world what it had been missing since The Whigs went to ground. They delivered one of the year's finest three-minute guitar songs in the burnished, soulful *Demon In Profile*, too.

34 Protomartyr

RELATIVES IN DESCENT

DOMINO

The Detroit post-rockers' fourth was a dark, bludgeoning listen. Frontman Joe Casey managed to evoke both Nick Cave and Mark E Smith on these 12 angular, lyrically dense constructions. A captivating, challenging record that rewards repeat listens.



32 Liam Gallagher

AS YOU WERE

WARNER

Liam Gallagher's solo career should be trumpeted, if only for it signalling the dissolution of the lumpen Beady Eye. Our kid came out of the traps swinging with the spiky, anthemic *Wall Of Glass*, and *Chinatown* packed a soaring chorus. The music world was a more monochrome place without Liam… just don't expect clever lyrics.

MY FAVOURITE ALBUM

CARL SMITHSON, TRUCK STORE OXFORD
THE NATIONAL, SLEEP WELL BEAST

"It was going to take something truly mind-blowing from another artist or a complete turkey from them to not have The National sitting at the top of my list! Consistently releasing brilliant records, they are that rare band that have got better as they've got bigger, and this is another masterpiece. Matt Berninger's anxiety-fuelled domestic observations are as evocative as ever, while the music shifts from poised, electronically enhanced melancholia to moments of cathartic rocking out."

22 DEBUT ALBUMS NOT DEBUT 78

29 Nadia Reid
PRESERVATION

BASIN ROCK

The New Zealand singer-songwriter dazzled us with the coruscating beauty of her second LP. Delicate guitar and late-night reflections on love and loss co-existed with withering rebukes: "Two little words that I used… One was fuck, the other was you". Sharon Van Etten fans will find much to like.

27 Father John Misty
PURE COMEDY

SUB POP

Josh Tillman probed the "comedy of man" on the sprawling title track of this verbose, masterful 75-minute tragi-comedy, which found him turning the critical microscope on himself over 13 minutes on *Leaving LA*.

25 Thundercat
DRUNK

BRAINFEEDER

Stephen Bruner's third album hit the shelves in February to rave reviews. A jazz-funk groove prevails, with Pharrell Williams and Kendrick Lamar guesting. To some, it sounded like fusion genius; to others, it resembled a slowed-down version of the *Chorlton And The Wheelies* theme tune.

23 Mac DeMarco
THIS OLD DOG

CAPTURED TRACKS

He's a bit young to be complaining about being long in the tooth just yet, but celebrated slacker Mac DeMarco dryly noted: "Uh-oh, looks like I'm seeing more of my old man in me", on an album of eminently likeable wry observational writing.

MY FAVOURITE ALBUM

STEVE HARNELL, EDITOR, CLASSIC POP MAGAZINE
NICK HEYWARD, WOODLAND ECHOES

"Positively brimming over with *joie de vivre*, the one-time Haircut 100 frontman's ninth studio album is a celebratory affair of melodic songcraft and the miracles of nature. Instantly hooky choruses abound, as do nods to the Fab Four, Big Star and Teenage Fanclub. One of the UK's most underrated songwriters is still very much operating at the top of his game."

30 Queens Of The Stone Age
VILLAINS

MATADOR

Mark Ronson and QOTSA may seem an unlikely partnership… but the results were undeniably brilliant. Josh Homme's unmistakable swagger remained prominent throughout, with the producer applying subtle pop glitter adornments – *Villains Of Circumstance* was one of the outstanding album closers of 2017.

28 Iron & Wine
BEAST EPIC

SUB POP

An enchanting American-folk collection, replete with ruminations on the passing of time and the ceaseless advance of age. Sam Beam's becalming vocal lulled us all the way across a consistent, harmonious body of work that's up there with his best.

26 Ghostpoet
DARK DAYS + CANAPES

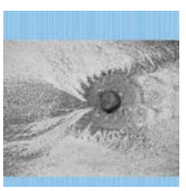
PLAY IT AGAIN SAM

Textured, nuanced and lyrically mature, Obaro Ejimiwe delivered his most well-rounded collection to date in August, his vocal style dovetailing hypnotically with Massive Attack's Daddy G on *Woe Is Meee*. *Immigrant Boogie* and *Freakshow* were strident moments on a moody piece of work.

24 TY SEGALL
TY SEGALL

UNIVERSAL

The prolific genre-curious Californian released his ninth solo and second eponymous record in the year he turned 30. It served as an excellent primer for his output – juxtaposing scuzzy, glam garage rock with his Lennon-esque troubadour side.



22 Four Tet
NEW ENERGY

TEXT RECORDS

A blissed-out dulcimer pattern was the sublime noise that heralded the king of ambient electro's ninth album. *New Energy* was wide-ranging in scope, from sedative atmospherics and Orbital-like loops to dancefloor fillers, and Kieran Hebden continued to restlessly innovate.

21 Courtney Barnett And Kurt Vile
LOTTA SEA LICE

MATADOR

The laconic country-tinged garage-rock of Kurt and Courtney's songs about writing songs was a hugely enjoyable affair – a pair of kindred misfit spirits making sense of the world through tremendous observational writing.

20 Brian Eno
REFLECTION

WARP

In contrast to the proliferation of notes per minute on the Thundercat album, here sparseness ruled, as ambient genius Eno carefully developed one stately piece over 54 minutes, frequencies shifting subtly like flakes of snow slowly melting on a winter window pane.

19 Big Thief
CAPACITY

SADDLE CREEK

Brooklyn's Big Thief treated us to a second album in as many years in 2017. Adrianne Lenker is a phenomenally talented vocalist and guitar player, gently fingerpicking one moment before wrestling with wanton feedback the next on a darkly compelling treasure of a record.

17 St. Vincent
MASSEDUCTION

LOMA VISTA/CAROLINE

The beautiful arrangement of lead single *New York* hooked us in, and the wildly diverse album didn't disappoint. Idiosyncratic guitar work, finely crafted electro art-pop tunes and first-person lyricism continued Anni Clark's weird and wonderful ascent.

15 Cigarettes After Sex
CIGARETTES AFTER SEX

PARTISAN RECORDS

We had to wait nine years for the debut album from former cinema manager Greg Gonzalez, but when it came it was a dreamy slow-burning wonder. Wistful, romantic and utterly immersive, it got its hooks in deep.

13 Alvvays
ANTISOCIALITES

TRANSGRESSIVE

Canadian dream-poppers Alvvays stole our hearts with their eponymous debut in 2014 only to hit us with more reverb-drenched wall-of-sound romance here. Single *In Undertow* was a melodic juggernaut we couldn't get out of our heads for months.

MY FAVOURITE ALBUM

JENNIFER OTTER BICKERDIKE,
WHY VINYL MATTERS AUTHOR
DIFFERENT DAYS, THE CHARLATANS

"Tim Burgess and the crew deliver an album packed with timely lyrics, jangling singalongs and an all-star guest line-up, including Gillian Gilbert, Johnny Marr, Stephen Morris and Paul Weller. The album is delivered on clear vinyl, while the singles are a variety of pastel Easter egg colours. The highlights include melancholy opening song, *Hey Sunrise*, and the title track."

MY FAVOURITE ALBUM

DUNCAN JORDAN,
INDEPENDENT MUSIC PR
FATHER JOHN MISTY, PURE COMEDY

"I should perhaps declare a slight bias, being that I'm his PR man, but that aside, *Pure Comedy* is just a truly extraordinary album – brilliant melodies, backed by beautiful orchestrations, addressing a vast array of themes on the state of humanity, with his trademark humour. It's a modern masterpiece and cements his status as one of the greatest contemporary songwriters."

18 Michael Head & The Red Elastic Band
ADIÓS SEÑOR PUSSYCAT

VIOLETTE RECORDS

With Shack on seemingly permanent leave, Michael Head reminded us that he remains one of the nation's deftest songwriters with a charming collection of songs that evokes The Byrds, Bacharach and Love.

16 Kelly Lee Owens
KELLY LEE OWENS

SMALLTOWN SUPERSOUND

Dream-pop, ambient techno, tabla rhythms, oscillating synths and spectral vocals combined on a dreamy debut from the North Wales singer and producer. It made for a beguiling, sonically adventurous whole that washes over the listener in somniferous fashion.

14 Beck
COLORS

VIRGIN EMI

After the bittersweet brilliance of 2014's *Morning Phase*, the musical polymath returned with technicolour pop which, in places, sounded more like Prince than some of the Purple One's own output. *Wow* was an irresistible highlight on a truly joyous album.

12 Stormzy
GANG SIGNS & PRAYER

#MERKY RECORDS

On his debut album, Michael Omari addressed religious faith, depression and racial inequality, all soundtracked by a cavalcade of menacing grime beats and no little wit and charm: "Just went to the park with my friends and I charted."

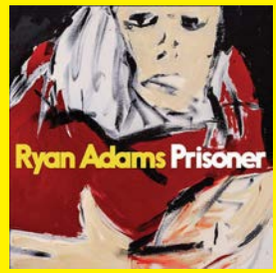
11 Phoebe Bridgers
STRANGER IN THE ALPS

DEAD OCEANS

Ryan Adams is a big fan and so are we. Bridgers' gentle beatific voice, delicate piano and some fine bowed guitar playing made an instant impression when her debut arrived in September. Conor Oberst dropped in for a cameo on *Would You Rather*, too.

10 Ryan Adams
PRISONER
VIRGIN EMI

After writing alt-country masterpieces *Heartbreaker* and *Gold*, exploring metal on *Orion* and, err, rock 'n' roll on *Rock N Roll*, here, Ryan made a foray into 80s classic-rock territory. *Do You Still Love Me?* was an anthem fit for a *Rocky* soundtrack, complete with a corking, spluttering guitar solo, Johnny Marr's influence was never far away and the legacy of his divorce coloured *To Be Without You* and *Breakdown*. Adams may be a more level character and more in control of his demons these days, but he continues to surprise and satisfy in equal measure with his outstanding musical output.



9 Fleet Foxes
CRACK-UP
NONESUCH

Its title inspired by an F Scott Fitzgerald essay, Fleet Foxes' third LP was a highbrow return to form after *Helplessness Blues* proved a slightly disappointing follow-up to their million-selling Bella Union debut. Ambitious and expansive, it began with three-part nu-psych opener *I Am All That I Need/Arroyo Seco/Thumbprint Scar* – a callback to *Helplessness Blues*' closing track *Grown Ocean*. The oblique, meandering album centrepiece *Third Of May/Odaigahara* was another pointer to the, at-times impenetrable, intelligently sculpted musicality at play. Robin Pecknold remains an enigmatic, articulate master craftsman.

8 Richard Dawson
PEASANT
WEIRD WORLD

The uninitiated may require patience to enter Dawson's esoteric world and *Peasant* is, surprisingly, the only Medieval concept album in our Top 100. Set in the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Bryneich, the arrangements were remarkable and Dawson's vocals jarring and frighteningly versatile. Some listeners may not get past the unorthodox, discordant music, but Dawson opened a compelling window to a bygone era, pondering on *Prostitute*: "How is it so that a child can be bought for a year's worth of grain in this day and age? It's hard to explain, but it happens again and again."

7 Jane Weaver
MODERN KOSMOLOGY
FIRE RECORDS

Its title was apparently taken from a 1970s Polish sci-fi movie banned by the communist state, and *Modern Kosmology* was similarly both retro-gazing and futuristic. Weaver made her name in 1990s indie band Kill Laura and earned critical acclaim with 2014 solo release *The Silver Globe*. Here, she was in similarly impressive form, with krautrock song structures, analogue synths and bittersweet crystalline melodies that don't lose sight of pop sensibilities occasionally flirting with the influence of The Velvet Undergound. The album added up to a picture of an artist finding her place and hitting peak form.

6 The War On Drugs
A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING
ATLANTIC

The War On Drugs' *Lost In The Dream* topped many critics' polls in 2014 and its follow-up is arguably a more complete record. Adam Granduciel relocated to the West Coast to painstakingly construct a multi-layered, nuanced powerhouse that crackles and shimmers with luminescent beauty. The guitar sound is as indulgently massive as you could wish to hear throughout and it's another great American road-trip record evocative of Springsteen, Dylan and Petty that underlines Granduciel and co's status as one of the most compelling and evocative guitar bands on the planet.

5 Slowdive
SLOWDIVE
DEAD OCEANS

Another heartening comeback story saw the kings of shoegaze return to take the critical acclaim that had been building since they disbanded in 1995, releasing their first album in 22 years. With the musical landscape ripe for their dreamy, reverb-lashed guitar assault, Reading's finest showed they can still do it better than their two decades' of imitators. *Star Roving* was one of the singles of the year, a shimmering wash of glorious noise, while Neil Halstead and Rachel Goswell's vocals dovetailed throughout a beatific lucid dream of a record in mesmeric fashion. A triumphant opening-night headline show at End Of The Road Festival in September completed their coronation.

MY FAVOURITE ALBUM

SIMON TAFFE,
END OF THE ROAD FESTIVAL CO-FOUNDER & DIRECTOR
BIG THIEF, CAPACITY

"This album has been on constant repeat since I got it. I love Adrianne Lenker's vocal style. It reminds me of Electrelane and the intimacy of Elliott Smith's vocals. She has such a way with words that really draw you into her world. This album really feels like you're going on a journey. Its seems like she's had quite the past, from strange upbringings to near-death experiences – and you can feel the music coming from a real place. They're not just trying to be clever with words; it's unpredictable where this LP will take you. Just buy it and listen to it five times – I'll give you your money back if you think it's shit."

MY FAVOURITE ALBUM

MEGAN PAGE,
RECORD STORE DAY COORDINATOR
BIG THIEF, CAPACITY

"There's probably only really a handful of albums in life which completely stop you in your tracks and you can remember exactly where you were and how you felt the first time you heard it. For me, this is 100% one of those records. It's mysterious indie-folk, intense and emotional from the start, delving into difficult themes of love, violence and childhood trauma. I'm basically so in awe of Adrianne Lenker and the second masterpiece Big Thief have produced."

45 SOLO ARTISTS 55 BANDS

4 Kevin Morby
CITY MUSIC
DEAD OCEANS

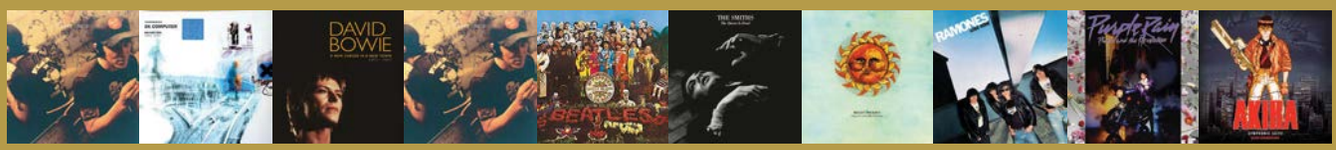
Texan singer-songwriter Kevin Morby is carving out quite a reputation for himself as a prolific solo artist, following his spells as the bassist in Woods and frontman in The Babies. His fourth album since going it alone, this rapid follow-up to 2016's *Singing Saw* was a wistful love letter to the cities the American has called home over the years. Opening track *Come To Me Now* was a beautiful widescreen tale of numbing solitude showcasing Morby's world-weary Dylan-like vocal. Morby painted from a varied palette on *City Music*, with New York's rich musical heritage clearly a highly influential factor, as he nodded to The Velvet Underground, the Ramones and The Strokes.

3 Kendrick Lamar
DAMN
TOP DAWG ENTERTAINMENT

The follow-up to 2015's stylistically shifting, million-selling masterpiece *Pimp A Butterfly* was initially touted by Lamar as less overtly political, perhaps in an attempt to sidestep the weight of the 'voice of a generation' tag being hoisted above him. Indeed, play the song *Fear* backwards and we heard Kendrick revealing: "The pain in my heart carry burdens for the struggle". Such protestations may have been something of a red herring, however, on a record awash with razor-sharp social commentary and a smouldering, more subtle disquiet at racial discrimination, America's lurch to the right and the cult of Trump. While Beyoncé and U2 are drafted in as guest contributors here, and there are potent shades of Curtis Mayfield's soulful falsetto on an album more musically coherent than its predecessor, it's Lamar's ability to capture the mood of dystopian America that made this the year's outstanding rap album.

2 The National
SLEEP WELL BEAST
4AD

Two decades into a career that has seen the Ohio natives grow exponentially with each carefully crafted work of melancholic brilliance, The National treated us to their most experimental, electronically adventurous record yet in September. It duly became their first No. 1 album. Lead single *The System Only Dreams In Total Darkness* was an angular shard of alt-rock wonder with the year's most memorable guitar solo, while elsewhere, Matt Berninger probed the dissolution of relationships and the current political malaise infecting America in his uniquely adroit fashion. Harp arpeggios, orchestras blasted through guitar pedals and skittering programmed beats highlighted a band at the peak of their powers and still restlessly reinventing.



TOP 10 REISSUES

10 Geinoh Yamashirogumi, *Akira* (Milan Records)
9 Prince, *Purple Rain* (Warner)
8 Ramones, *Leave Home* (Rhino)
7 Lal And Mike Waterson, *Bright Phoebus* (Domino Records)
6 The Smiths, *The Queen Is Dead* (Warner)
5 The Beatles, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (EMI)
4 Elliott Smith, *Either/Or: Expanded Edition* (Kill Rock Stars)
3 David Bowie, *A New Career In A New Town (1977 – 1982)* (Parlophone)
2 Radiohead, *OK Computer OKNOTOK 1997 2017* (XL)
1 Alice Coltrane, *The Ecstatic Music of Alice Coltrane Turiyasangitananda* (Luaka Bop)

ALBUM OF THE YEAR

1 LCD Soundsystem
AMERICAN DREAM
COLUMBIA/DFA

A triumphant comeback that proved James Murphy was premature in calling it a day with that lucrative Madison Square Garden show back in 2011. David Bowie's sage words of advice provided the motivation for Murphy to get the band back together and Bowie's shadow is cast heavily over the entire record, from the *"Heroes"*-evoking guitar work of the joyous sprawling lead single *Call The Police* to the *Scary Monsters*-flavoured synths of *Other Voices*. Weighing in at a heavyweight 82 minutes, our Album Of The Year is packed with electro bangers, squelchy synths, driving motorik rhythms and post-punk brilliance. The swirling, hypnotic nine-minute *How Do You Sleep?* is one of the finest tracks you'll hear anywhere in 2017, while *Tonite* and *Emotional Haircut* fizz with infectious disco brilliance and provide a reminder – as if one were needed – that Murphy is a bona-fide musical genius and one of the most consistently on-the-money songwriters of our generation. ●

GEAR OF THE YEAR 2017

A great year for vinyl has been matched by a strong crop of new gear – **Paul Rigby** picks the standouts

In 2017, the British Phonographic Industry confirmed that, in terms of market share, vinyl strengthened as a physical format for music. A report from the UK industry body confirmed sales had risen by 53% to reach a 25-year high. To support all these sales, a wide range of turntables have been released this year, plus some amazing amps, speakers and headphones. We've corralled the best of those released, or reviewed by us, this year and divided them into price points (to make it simpler to add to your Christmas list), awarding the prestigious *Long Live Vinyl* award to the very best, and bestowing honourable mentions to two others in each category.

SUB-BUDGET BELOW £250

There are a host of turntables on the market that retail at such a low price, they undercut even the traditionally popular budget models. Hence, they fit into a category titled 'sub-budget'…

LONG LIVE VINYL GEAR OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNER 2017

LENCO L-3808

PRICE £200

LENCOUK.COM

It's got to be the bargain of the year – it was certainly the surprise of the year. The superb L-3808, with built-in phono amp, belies the 'it's made in China, so it must be bad' fallacy, by offering an easy to set up and use turntable that worries even good-quality budget models at a much higher price in sonic terms. Yes, it looks like a Technics and suffers a little from its low build budget, but sub-budget audiophiles should ignore its DJ-tool looks. Based on a direct-drive system (the secret to its success), the Lenco provides a great suite of lower frequencies along with precision in the upper midrange and a focus that amazes at this price point. Change the default cartridge to an elliptical model as soon as you can, though.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

AUDIO-TECHNICA LP3

PRICE £199

EU.AUDIO-TECHNICA.COM

Another offering that's made in China (at this price point, it's to be expected), the LP3 is packed with features, including a built-in phono amplifier and an automatic-play option which, although rather 'plasticky' in build, works well and efficiently and will be attractive to those who want push-button play.

DUAL MTR-75

PRICE £250

BIGREDSALES.CO.UK

In fact, both are based upon the same general design, with a built-in phono amplifier and automatic play.

It's a bit on the expensive side, but Dual provides its own Chinese turntable offering with another impressive design that looks like the Audio-Technica LP3 above.

BUDGET FROM £250 TO £600

We've rejigged our price categories a little from Issue 9's Buyer's Guide, to squeeze in a few more turntables at this busy price point

LONG LIVE VINYL GEAR OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNER 2017

REGA
PLANAR 1

PRICE £248

REGA.CO.UK

"'Ang on!," you cry. "This one is actually two pounds under the sub-budget price point, and wasn't it released late in 2016? What gives?" We know, we know – but look, we have our reasons. Firstly, if there's one thing we wouldn't want to burden the Planar 1 with, it's the label of 'sub-budget'. The design itself screams care and attention. Secondly, we altered our time-machine coordinates to ensure it was included (and we did review it this year, after all). It's simply too good to ignore. Lastly, the sound quality is just… stunning. We even have to pause before saying the word… stunning. See? That's how good this turntable is. Also, the build budget has been carefully considered and Rega's sole aim is to promote sound quality. This is a two-speed, manual deck with no extras and no toys. You even have to move the belt along the motor pulley to change the speed. The end result? At the risk of repeating ourselves… Stunning.

AMPLIFIER WINNER
REGA BRIO

PRICE £600

rega.co.uk

"The Fall — always different, always the same," said the late, lamented BBC radio DJ John Peel of his favourite band. Rega has followed the same philosophy with the Brio, which strongly resembles past amplifier releases, but ups the ante by enhancing sound quality in this sixth-generation model.

HIGHLY COMMENDED...

ELIPSON
OMEGA 100

PRICE £300

AVOKE.CO.UK

A highlight of this design is that it has emerged wholly from the minds of the French manufacturer. Commendable in itself. More so, when you consider that most other budget designs on the market are badged in the factories of either Rega or Pro-Ject.

PRO-JECT
ESSENTIAL III

PRICE £240

HENLEYAUDIO.CO.UK

The latest in a highly respected line of budget turntables, this latest iteration in the Essential line took four years to come to fruition. Pro-Ject sees it as the first hi-fi standard turntable in its range, and it's a great-sounding stylish opening salvo.

HIGHLY COMMENDED...

EDWARDS AUDIO TT2SE

PRICE £849

TALKELECTRONICS.COM

The stunning-looking Audio TT2SE features a 25mm gloss MDF plinth and an aluminium sub-platter, plus stainless-steel shaft and ceramic bearing. The acrylic platter is an Edwards creation, while the tonearm is a TA202 (no cartridge is supplied as standard). This belt-drive turntable features a speed-change control box, and the upshot of all this is a sound that's mature and confident.

THORENS TD 203

PRICE £600

UKD.CO.UK

From a venerable turntable brand, and featuring a bundled TP 82 arm and TAS 257 MM cartridge (think Audio-Technica AT3600), this two-speed deck includes an electronic-motor speed change. It also looks good and feels good, with an admirable build quality. A compelling choice.

MIDRANGE £600 TO £1,200

Makers run out of excuses at this price point. If you're spending money at this level, then all of the basics have to be done right...

PRO-JECT CLASSIC

PRICE £900

HENLEYAUDIO.CO.UK

Even standing, looking at this turntable from a distance of 15 feet, you feel warmed and enthused by the Classic. Because, well, it looks like a 'classic'. A trustworthy design from the days of analogue yore. It looks so 'right', you're filled with confidence before you even place a finger on it. But while this turntable might look as if it has emerged from a page in history, its design application is decidedly modern in tone. The design arrives in two layers, to provide isolation and lower noise. This is helped by the low-noise AC motor, plus the six TPE (thermoplastic elastomer) damping balls. Even the aluminium platter has had damping applied to it. The newly designed tonearm features carbon fibre and aluminium, while the arm's bearing is a low-friction model. This belt-driven model arrives with an Ortofon 2M Silver moving-magnet cartridge, created exclusively for Pro-Ject. Sound-wise, it offers a full bass sound, together with fine upper-frequency detail.

SPEAKER WINNER TANNOY EATON

PRICE $4,400

tannoy.com

Taking a classic design from the 70s and updating it with modern technology, the Eaton bucks the 'thin is great' trend to offer a wide front fascia and a meaty 10" mid-bass unit with soundstage imaging to thrill and tonal realism that will make you weep into your Beaujolais.

HIGH END £1,200+

You're really looking for something special here – a well-structured sound stage, mature sound and rich sonic feedback, with detail aplenty…

ORIGIN
LIVE SOVEREIGN
(with Enterprise-C tonearm)

PRICE £6,090
(WITH 12" ARM MOUNTING)

SME.CO.UK

Alert readers will note that this turntable was originally released sometime in 2009 and, hence, could be argued to have no place in this awards feature. But, just hang on in there! The company recently upgraded the turntable's external power supply, which reached a new level in sonic terms. They then upgraded the external motor unit, which also reached a new level in sonic terms. More recently still, the company completely changed the plinth of the turntable, adding many more sonic enhancements. Which means that every part of this turntable has now received a startling upgrade. The result? It's basically a new design. In sonic terms, this turntable – and we would recommend adding the company's Enterprise-C arm to go with it (we've used it with the 12" version for £4,995) – is an amazing listen. One of the industry's most underappreciated designs, the Sovereign is one of the best turntables in the world.

HEADPHONES WINNER
AKG K72

PRICE £40

uk.akg.com

We could have selected any number of expensive audiophile designs, but were impressed with AKG and its attempt to bring real music to the poor souls enamoured by Skullcandy and their devilish brethren, who offer style over substance. The AKGs offer quality sound, capable of challenging designs costing considerably more.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

SME
MODEL 15A

PRICE £8,050

SME.CO.UK

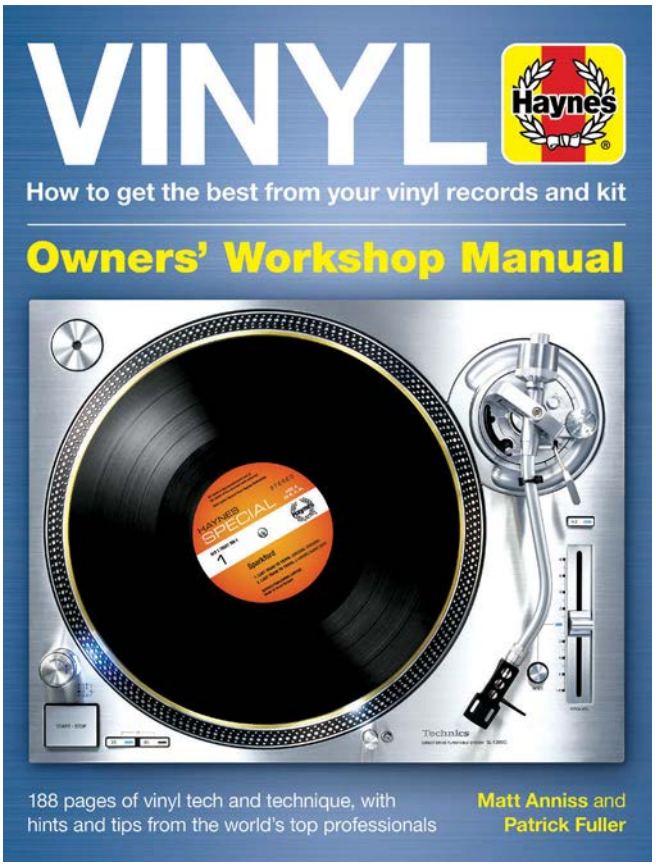
A UK-based outfit, SME has been around since 1946. the 15A is all about precision engineering, and it's incredibly impressive on those terms alone. Heavy at 20kg, this is a turntable that oozes sonic authority. The Model 15A is a deck that will last many years… generations, in fact.

T+A
G2000 R

PRICE £5,205

TA-HIFI.DE

The price of this strong, sturdy and reliable turntable includes a Clearaudio tonearm and MC-2 cartridge (which looks like a tweaked version of Clearaudio's own Essence MC). If you add another £545, though, you can insert a phono amplifier into the plinth for a luxurious 'all in one' design. ●



NEW!

NO FLUFF

Get sound advice for the vinyl revival from Haynes

AVAILABLE AT HAYNES.COM AND ALL GOOD BOOKSHOPS

we are THE MODS

The most outspoken, witty and incisive of our Top 100 Albums Of 2017 came from Sleaford Mods. Their brutally honest frontman Jason Williamson tells ***Long Live Vinyl*** why he has no time for nostalgia…

It's safe to say that Sleaford Mods frontman Jason Williamson does not view the past through rose-tinted glasses. Instead, he thinks nostalgia is a sickness and, consciously or not, he seems to be on a crusade to stamp it out. His aversion to looking back is there in the title track from 2016's five-track EP *T.C.R.*: "That 50s look can do one/ Elvis has definitely left the fucking building". It's there in his memories of growing up in Grantham ("It was terrible, it's always been terrible," he says). It's there, too, in Williamson's disappointed sigh when he tells us about a recent episode on social media.

The acerbic frontman of one of the UK's most hilariously incisive and polemical bands wouldn't usually let a troll put one of his closely cropped hairs out of place. Trolls get short shrift already on the duo's tracks, such as 2012's *Shit Streets Runny* ("I post horrible messages to successful musicians on me smartphone, fucking Twitter") and this year's *Just Like We Do* ("Pretentious little bastard on social medias"). What irks Williamson, though, is when his band's music is called into question by online warriors who think Oasis are the pinnacle of human achievement and talk in a stream of cut-up Beatles lyrics.

"I went on his page and it was Beatles this, Beatles that," groans Williamson, when we

speak to him halfway through Sleaford Mods' latest (and biggest) UK tour – the last hurrah in a year that's seen the band's music reach more people than ever. "If people feel comfortable walking round in a Beatles T-shirt with a mop top and a short leather jacket, then fine, more power to them. But personally, I think it doesn't energise contemporary music. It doesn't energise creativity in a valuable sense, in a here-and-now sense, you know? I think that is the driving force… it *has* to be the driving force behind any musician. Someone else's idea has been hijacked enough, hasn't it? Why would you want to play the same chord sequence that Lennon and McCartney did?"

Williamson does, however, have residual sympathy left for those who do. Sleaford Mods may have laid down a distinctive, brutalist path over their last four albums of clipped, minimal beats and pulverising rhymes about the state of the nation – never better than on this year's brilliant *English Tapas* – but Williamson understands perfectly well the allure of seeking out mythical golden eras. Growing up in dead-end Grantham, east of Nottingham, Williamson was a Jam- and Style Council-chasing mod, and after that he followed the herd down to Camden during the sequel to Swinging London: Britpop. But it got him nowhere for far too long and now living in the past is anathema to what Williamson and Andrew Fearn do as Sleaford Mods.

"Like, what are you looking at today that you might get the same thing from?" asks Williamson, aiming his question at anyone who thinks Ray Davies and Ringo have something relevant to say about life in zero-hours Britain. "These people have done their bit. But there's been piles of other people who have done comparable things, but in a more contemporary age, in an age when it says more about people's lives today, you know what I mean?"

SLEAFORD NODS

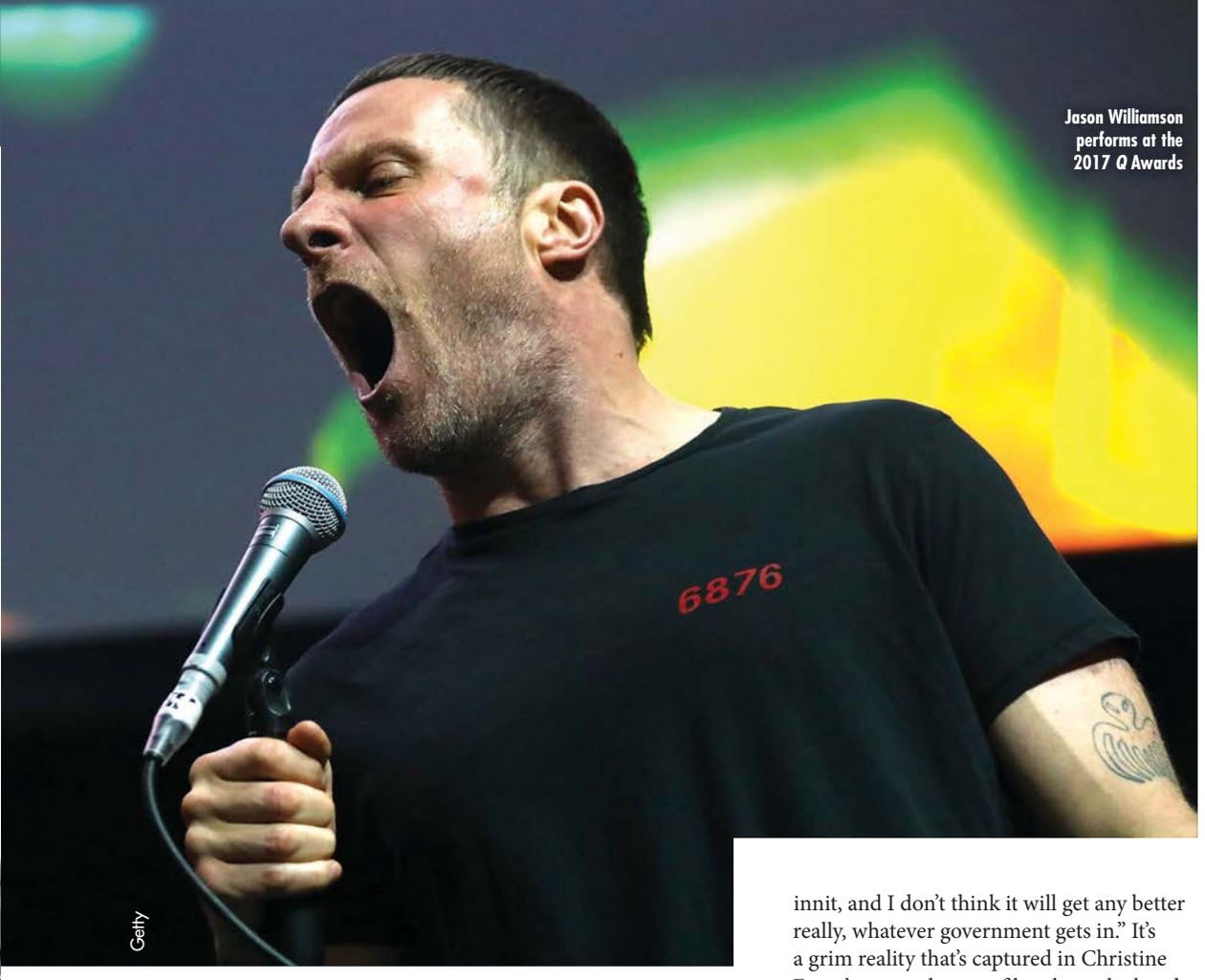
Williamson, who is now in his late 40s, freely admits that his hip-hop true loves Wu-Tang Clan, Raekwon, Ghostface Killah and Kool G Rap – the acts that really started him off on the journey to where he is now – are long in the tooth these days. It's why he and Fearn are always seeking out new inspiration from modern electronica, soul and grime. Williamson cites UK rapper Giggs and grime MCs such as Stormzy and Roachee as the sort of artists that have that hunger he needs to hear.

"I read a thing with Steve Jones the other day and he was like: 'I don't listen to grime, I've never heard of it, why should I? It's a young person's music,'" says Williamson about the Sex Pistols guitarist. "But I wouldn't think twice about listening to *anything*. I'm constantly listening to street music, because that's what's the most vibrant, interesting stuff. You've just got to be careful to honour that music, and if you're inspired by it, it's important not to blatantly rip it off. There's ways of sewing it into your music to make it yours."

So what does a man who eschews the past for the present think about vinyl? Even the most ardent collector has to admit that there's something nostalgic about buying records, even if it's new music. Does Williamson feel the same love for it as we do? His fans certainly do. Sleaford Mods' CD-R albums – from the time before Fearn turned up with his drum machine – sell for huge sums. Not as much as the band's early singles, though. A 2013 7" release of *Jobseeker*, on Belgian label KRAAK, is listed from £90, while *Tied Up In Nottz*, on German label Little Teddy, goes for £70-plus. Both releases were the result of early European tours when, says Williamson, "the UK just didn't want to know".

Fourth Dimension's 2014 seven-inch of the Ian Beale-baiting *Mr Jolly Fucker* will set you back a mighty £150. Even the duo's 2013 *Austerity Dogs* album on Harbinger Sound – the label set up by their manager Steve Underwood – is worth at least £75. These prices might be candidates for the @VinylStupidity Twitter feed, but they show just how revered the band have become. What do Williamson and Fearn make of it all? "We laugh about it constantly," says Williamson. "I know that's a record

"WHY WOULD YOU WANT TO PLAY THE SAME CHORD SEQUENCE THAT LENNON AND MCCARTNEY DID?"



Jason Williamson performs at the 2017 *Q* Awards

Getty

collectors' thing, you know. Some of the records Steve buys… I've known him to spend 500, 600 quid on an album. He's always been into it. He's always had these ideas about how music should be presented. He's got a lot of concrete opinions about it. So it was only right for him to get a record label going, and I guess that's how Harbinger Sound started. He's always been a leader, Steve. Two things combine – and alakazam!"

Williamson's own relationship with vinyl is, it has to be said, much cooler. After chasing his mod, punk and indie-rock dreams in the 80s and 90s, he was involved with Nottingham's hip-hop scene in the early 00s and would lift samples off his favourite records on early Sleaford Mods tracks before Fearn brought his beats to the table in 2012. But vinyl is less significant to Williamson these days: "I haven't got any, really, apart from when I was a kid."

Instead of a massive record collection, Williamson's ideas are gleaned from a life lived through bleak times. "Work's crap, full stop, but when you can't afford to live and you're still working full-time hours… it's a real drag," he says, reflecting on the life he led before Sleaford Mods took off. "It's a real heavy thing. People don't realise that. They think: 'Oh, this band has come out of the last seven years'. But no, this band has come out of a *life*." He's all too aware, then, of how hard things are for people. He doesn't shy away from fans with their own stories to tell, and he and Fearn raised funds for homeless charity Shelter on their latest UK tour. "It's been a catalogue of bleakness and that's all connected to capitalism," he adds. "Connected to working to live. It's ongoing, innit, and I don't think it will get any better really, whatever government gets in." It's a grim reality that's captured in Christine Franz's enraged recent film about the band, *Bunch Of Kunst*.

GRANTHAM GRAMMAR

Williamson and Fearn feel fortunate to be in the position they are. This year, they've continued their unstoppable march, winning new fans at Glastonbury and across Europe. As well as releasing their own acclaimed album, Williamson has appeared on Baxter Dury's *Prince Of Tears* and, in a sign that he's edged into counterculture statesman territory, he's just published a book of his lyrics called *Grammar Wanker*. Things aren't slowing down. And with uncertain times ahead, Sleaford Mods still have plenty of business to attend to. "We're a band of our time," signs off Williamson, "and our time is still here." ●

HOW TO BUY

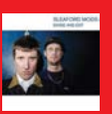
Sleaford Mods on vinyl

AUSTERITY DOGS

(2013) Harbinger Sound

On their first album proper following a clutch of singles and the self-released CD-R, *Wank*, Sleaford Mods introduced themselves in incendiary fashion. *Austerity Dogs* was a coarse, brilliantly observed state-of-the-nation essay. "I hate that lad shit, that red-top, nice tits, Ian McCulloch, white boy, bore me fuckless terrace bit", Williamson ranted, aiming at the prevailing popular culture.

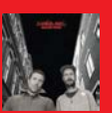
DIVIDE AND EXIT



(2014) Harbinger Sound

After 10 years at the coalface, seven albums in, the breakthrough proper arrived in 2014. Gallows humour and unflinching realism abounded: "The smell of piss is so strong it smells like decent bacon." No target was off limits on this angry, insightful blast of sparse brilliance: senseless nationalism, the royal family, guitar music 'dinosaurs of Denmark Street' and social-media addiction, not least on the excellent *Tiswas*.

ENGLISH TAPAS



(2017) Rough Trade

Sleafords album number nine, and No. 35 in our Top Albums Of 2017 poll, employed a very slightly expanded sonic palette, with the topic of Brexit never far from Williamson's crosshairs. His disaffection reached such a crescendo that he, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, pleaded: "Bring back the neo-libs, I'm sorry/ I didn't mean to pray for anarchy". There was far more than Brexit to the band's most incisive and potent record to date, though.

DHANI HARRISON
PARALLEL UNIVERSE

After many years of collaborations and projects ranging from vinyl boxsets to video games, as well as becoming a sought-after film and TV composer, Dhani Harrison has finally released a debut solo album. **Murray Stassen** finds out more about his new record, *In Parallel…*

"If you're doing something and you're authentic about it, it shows," Dhani Harrison tells *Long Live Vinyl* over the phone from Santa Monica, California. "If you're on stage performing and you're having a good time, it shows. You can see people who are having a good time."

It's the morning after Harrison's late-night performance on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* He and his band played two tracks, *All About Waiting* and *Summertime Police*, from their new album (stylised as *IN/// PARALLEL)*. They had a great time – and it definitely shows.

"It was good fun," Harrison continues, upbeat and composed. "I like doing television, because it always sounds good. They have good crews."

Out in October via BMG, *In Parallel* is Harrison's debut solo LP and in spite of the demanding promo schedule, he says that promoting his own record for the first time has been "different, but lovely".

"You do a lot of work and you do a lot of press," he says. "But I like to stay busy."

Harrison is the heir to a rock 'n' roll throne once occupied by the myth, the legend, The Beatle, father George. Some might expect that a legacy of that magnitude would result in a certain level of self-righteousness, but Harrison, having kept a fairly low profile in the media throughout his professional career, seems genuinely grateful that anyone would like the music he's making.

"I don't usually do any press," he says. "But everyone has received the record really well, much better than I actually expected. We went around Europe and I was really shocked as to how people got the record. I don't want to jinx myself, but it's all going really well."

There's naturally a lot of interest in Harrison's work, not just because he's the son of a Beatle, but also because it's taken him a career in music spanning more than 15 eventful years to release music under his own name.

During that time, he co-produced George Harrison's posthumous album *Brainwashed* with Jeff Lynne, which won a Grammy in 2004 for the song *Marwa Blues*, as well as producing the live *George Fest* album and live DVD from the George Fest concert in 2014.

He's also released three albums and two EPs with Thenewno2, his band with long-time collaborator Paul Hicks (son of Hollies guitarist Tony Hicks) and one album, *As I Call You Down*, with Fistful Of Mercy, which he formed with singer-songwriters Ben Harper and Joseph Arthur.

Additionally, he helped to develop *The Beatles: Rock Band* videogame, as well as forging a successful career as a TV and film soundtrack composer, which has seen him score the likes of *Beautiful Creatures* and *Learning To Drive*.

ALL ABOUT WAITING

Written, produced and engineered by Harrison, *In Parallel* is described in the press release accompanying the album as "a sprawling, pre- and post-apocalyptic cinematic universe". Further background info reveals that the record's dystopian theme and overtones of paranoia and gloom stem from Harrison's observation of the current world of social-media obsession, social and political unrest, police brutality and his own personal experiences of fear and loss.

His expertise as a composer for film and TV is evident in his ability to tell a profound story with music alone, and his previous comment on authenticity makes more sense the more you listen to the album. It doesn't sound forced, contrived or pretentious, instead feeling like a sincere observation of a dissatisfied global society. And clearly, there is currently a lot to be dissatisfied about.

"Things started to get a bit weird about three or four years ago," he says. "The world started to get a bit more strange in my eyes. And with the experiences I was having whilst travelling around, I thought, 'I should probably be writing this down'.

"So I just kind of let these experiences in my life dictate which way the record went. Songs like that, you don't really just come up with them one day unless you have that particular experience. I can only write from my own experience, so it took a while to live the record and it was definitely an intense record to have lived."

The album had a lengthy gestation period, due largely to Harrison's many other commitments in music, including the soundtrack work, as well his involvement in the boxset, *George Harrison – The Vinyl Collection*, released at the start of 2017.

Look out for Harrison's European tour dates in 2018

Getty

WITH A LITTLE HELP...

"Because I was just working on it by myself, it kept falling by the wayside due to a lot of big projects that I was doing," says Harrison. "It started to take form and then I kept having to put it on hold, because I would be scoring a movie, or I'd be scoring a TV show and that would require all of my time."

While the record was entirely composed and produced by Harrison, he did enlist the help of Thenewno2 bandmate and lifelong friend Hicks for some "programming and mixing", as well as a variety of all-star musicians to record the music, including violinist Davide Rossi. "He has worked on everything, from Coldplay to Goldfrapp and The Verve," says Harrison. "If you've ever heard any of the strings on any Coldplay record, that's all him, by himself. He's a one-man Wrecking Crew.

"He's an incredible composer and arranger. Although I already had most of the stuff for this record written and arranged, he just came in and played it. That's his speciality. He's like a one-man orchestra."

Also featured on the album are vocalists Mereki, who sings on *London Water* and *Poseidon (Keep Me Safe)*, and Camila Grey, who features on *All About Waiting*, multi-instrumentalist Jonathan Bates and Jane's Addiction drummer Stephen Perkins.

"Paul Hicks is the person I've made all my records with and compose with. But he doesn't really feature on this record," explains Harrison. "There's a little bit of programming from him and a little bit of mixing here and there, but we're also busy working on soundtracks together. The album was my way of relaxing, so that I didn't have to constantly be working on the same things.

"Jonathan Bates, from the band Big Black Delta, who is an incredible songwriter, was actually working out of my studio when he was finishing his last record. He was also producing another record out of my studio, and his music really influenced me a lot. I feel that we were sharing a lot of the vibe from his new record on this record.

"That's why Camila Grey featured on this record, because she was a featured vocalist in Big Black Delta. It's just a big community of people who are all used to playing music with each other."

Recorded mostly in Los Angeles, Harrison says that he enjoyed engineering the album, and adds that knowing your way around the studio is not only useful but also expected these days – although he does

JUKE SPIRIT

Dhani's jukebox-load of curated vinyl is in need of repair...

"I spend a lot of time as a designer, so I work a lot with vinyl artwork," says Dhani. "We just released that George Harrison boxset, which took me about 16 years. I also collect vinyl; I have my favourite albums I keep to play on my turntable. I also have a jukebox. It's broken at the moment, because the DWP (LA Department Of Water And Power) has fried the circuitry in my house. They blew up my jukebox, so I'm most upset with them. It takes 45s and I just got it all curated, and finished with labels and everything. It's an AMI Continental II jukebox. It's very nice. It looks like George Jetson's car. I've always grown up with jukeboxes, so if your jukebox is no good, then that is a reflection of you."

COVER STORY

Capturing the spirit of the album on camera

"We've brought out a really nice 180-gram heavyweight vinyl, and it's got really nice packaging," says Harrison of *In Parallel*. "I swore that I would not be putting a photograph on the cover unless it was done in the right way and it could convey the right feeling. We did a bunch of photoshoots and I was designing stuff and we were just not achieving it. We ended up going out into the forest in Idyllwild and just took natural photos. We just had a night where we went walking in the snow and sat in nature and meditated. The cover just came from one of those photographs. Suddenly, it all made sense, but it just took a really long time to get there and to capture the feeling of the record."

concede that it is very time consuming. "I have a little studio out here where my label is, and then obviously, I use my father's studio that was left to me in England," he says. "But that's undergoing a renovation at the moment, so it's mostly been in my tiny little editing room out in Los Angeles, because that's where I was most of the time I was composing.

"I don't think that if I was going to do another record right now that I'd engineer it myself. I want to be free to do other stuff and I just spend such an intensive amount of time on programming," says Harrison. "But you know, it's one of those things. When you need to, if you can, it's obviously handy to be able to do it yourself. I can't wait around for someone to come and do it if I have ideas in the middle of the night. And everyone has laptop studios these days anyway, so you can work anywhere."

DHANI'S BOYS

With the previous night's televised gig still on his mind, Harrison praises his current live band and suggests that a new record with them might be on the cards at some point in the future.

"They're an extremely powerful band," he says. "They're really great. It's kind of heavy, actually. We just did a soundtrack together, so there were a few names floating around, but I'm not sure if it's anything serious just yet. I look forward to doing a record with them."

The band is made up of musicians Harrison has played with in other bands, and he shares members of the group with Summer Moon, the band of The Strokes' bassist Nikolai Fraiture, who he is out on tour with in the US in November.

"They're good guys," he adds. "Noah [Harmon] from my band and Camila Grey are in Summer Moon, and Stephen Perkins used to be my drummer for Thenewno2.

"THE ALBUM WAS MY WAY OF RELAXING, SO I DIDN'T HAVE TO CONSTANTLY BE WORKING ON THE SAME THINGS"

So there are a lot of double duties in the band. Because everyone has been in three different bands with the same people now, it doesn't really matter what configuration it's in. Noah used to be my bass player and now he's my guitar player. It just fits all together."

Having collaborated with artists ranging from Wu-Tang Clan to Regina Spektor and Pearl Jam, Harrison tells us there are still a few artists he'd really like to work with.

"Anyone from any of my favourite bands, such as Massive Attack or Portishead; all of those Bristol bands," he says. "Obviously, I've also always wanted to collaborate with Anoushka Shankar [Ravi Shankar's daughter], who is like my sister – and that is something that we have never done. We're just both so busy.

"Liam Howlett as well. He's a person that I've always wanted to do something with because I'm such a huge Prodigy fan. I got very lucky. I got the opportunity to collaborate with UNKLE this year, which is another one of my favourite bands.

"So I'm just going to carry on doing what I'm doing and if any of those things that I've said out there into the universe get heard, then maybe we'll look forward to doing something."

For now, though, Harrison explains that he's just looking forward to playing the album live, and has plans to tour Europe in the New Year, once the US tour with Summer Moon has concluded.

"It's a lot more fun to be going out playing music every day, than to be going out talking about it," he jokes. ●

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THE ESSENTIAL

Hip-hop

From block-party origins to multi-millionaire empires, no music quite represents the 'American Dream' (and nightmare) like hip-hop. **Michael Leonard** digs through 30-plus years of LPs from wildly differing styles of urban music born of vinyl itself…

In August 1973, at 1520 Sedgwick Avenue in the west Bronx, there was a party: 25c for 'ladies' and 50c for 'fellas'. And that, says legend, is when hip-hop was born. Man-mountain Clive 'Hercules' Campbell, aka Kool Herc, was a Jamaican DJ already armed with a two-turntable setup, and he started mixing tracks and scratching live for the first time (publicly, at least), while his friend 'Coke La Rock' (no one remembers him!) rapped over the beats. It makes hip-hop 44 years old. The rest is… here.

Even in broad-brush terms, 'rap' and 'hip-hop' aren't interchangeable. Rap is the rapping, hip-hop the wider culture of rappers, DJs, graffiti, breakdancing et al, as decreed by another NYC legend, Fab 5 Freddy. At least it once was. No raps? There are still hip-hop instrumentals – arguably the bedrock of much of today's cut-and-paste pop.

Rap is now everywhere, but hip-hop is not. Vanilla Ice may have had the first No. 1 Billboard rap single with *Ice Ice Baby*, but is that essential hip-hop? You be trippin'! (Ice's story is actually pretty complex, but… sorry, time's up!). Drake is the world's primo music star right now and he raps. But Drake's not hip-hop. Not anymore. And, of course, rappin' Ed Sheeran is dead to us. In fact, we've gone all North American here. We appreciate the UK's produced its own share of wildly inventive rap artists – from Massive Attack to Tricky, via The Streets and Roots Manuva to Plan B and Dizzee Rascal, even the current grime scene stars such as Skepta – but they don't sit easily inside 'just' a hip-hop capsule.

Even if you redux hip-hop to 'two turntables and a microphone' – no longer the case, anyway – you'll find more variety than you could fathom. Deep funk, disco, jams and politics… love songs, violence, dadaism and party tricks. And some pretty offensive stuff, too. It's called life.

Hip-hop isn't always best suited to albums – in no small part due to dance's culture of extended floor-fillers, varying mixes, novelty tracks, or simple one-off masterstrokes. *It's Yours* (1984) by T La Rock was a game-changer, but any long-term album success for T was elusive. No matter, there are some great old-school compilations. Here, we're concerned with the full works. But we're egalitarian – only one album per artist. And spread across as many years as is realistic, in reverse chronology. It's been a tough call…

40 GOOD KID, M.A.A.D CITY
KENDRICK LAMAR 2012

Classics are hard to call straight away – some are saying that Lamar's fourth *LP Damn* (2017) is already that, but it was this conflicted tale about his Compton upbringing that made Lamar "the James Joyce of hip-hop" (!) according to Georgia Regents University professor Adam Diehl. Young but wise beyond his years on the likes of *The Art Of Peer Pressure*, this LP set Kendrick Lamar on a stratospheric rise.

Discogs
£17-£24 (median £19)

39 FOOD AND LIQUOR
LUPE FIASCO 2006

Years in the making with Kanye, Jay-Z, The Neptunes and Pharrell Williams all involved, *Food And Liquor* nevertheless arrived like a breath of fresh air. It's wonderfully melodic, with strings and big keyboard sweeps flying over the beats, as 25-year-old Fiasco lays bare his "heart and soul". Hip-hop here is merely the vehicle for a fast-travelling mind that avoids and outwardly challenges cliché – an aptly named, nourishing and intoxicating album.

Discogs
£15-£59 (median £31)

38 BE
COMMON 2005

Its real victory is for Kanye again, as co-producer, but Common's sixth album sees the Chicago native stepping up his rhyme game, too. With *The Corner* featuring The Last Poets and *They Say* starring John Legend, it's inclusive, warm and innovative, yet also cohesive in an all-too-rare example of how strong and varied a modern hip-hop LP can be. "He's the Marvin Gaye of rap," enthused West.

Discogs
£4-£8 (median £6)

36 SPEAKERBOXXX / THE LOVE BELOW
OUTKAST 2003

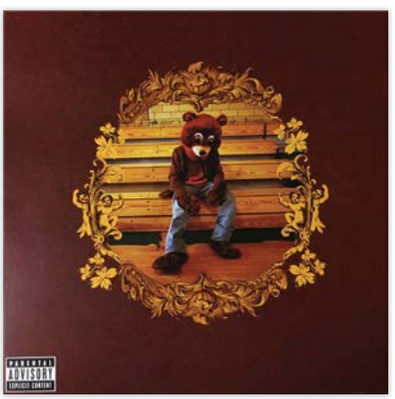
One of hip-hop's most audacious album releases, this is in essence two solo albums by Big Boi and Andre 3000. *Hey Ya!* fuelled its massive crossover, but Big Boi's Southern rap wins overall, even though there's everything from G-funk to pop, electro to rock, soul to blues seeping across its eclectic grooves. Disjointed to some, but it's hip-hop personified – and a glorious reminder of the only rules being no rules.

Discogs
£18-£35 (median £22)

34 THE BLUEPRINT
JAY-Z 2001

Bootlegged so much its release was pushed forward, this album birthed *Izzo (H.O.V.A.)* and *Song Cry*, and after a few years of keyboard-led records, it went back – implied by its title – to classic soul as the bedrock. *Heart Of The City* even proved the Jigga wasn't all tough guy... He's more franchise than art, really, but at least he's sometimes funny: "Your reign was shorter than leprechauns". Yep, he was back.

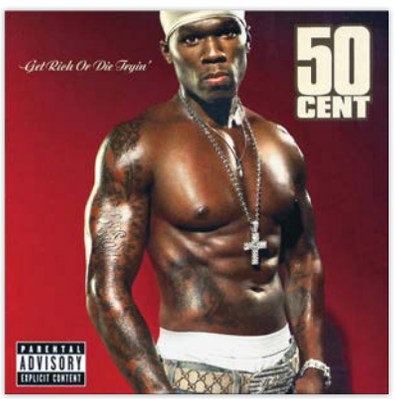
Discogs
£15-£35 (median £21)



37 THE COLLEGE DROPOUT
KANYE WEST 2004

These days, Kanye West is an irritating egomaniac. Back then, he was an irritating egomaniac who made great hip-hop, and blew up the business with this guest- and soul-sample packed treatise on how a "failure" wins. The skits may be tiresome after repeated listens, but they kinda *have* to be there: this was everyman hip-hop for a contradictory, confused and consumerist age.

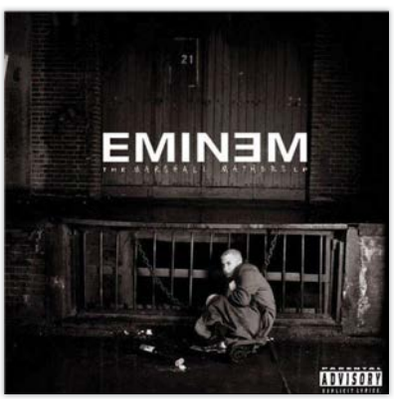
Discogs
£7-£40 (median £20)



35 GET RICH OR DIE TRYIN'
50 CENT 2003

Fiddy's tale is so clichéd it sounds made up, but that's what made him such a success. Bottom line, his debut's runaway victory could simply not be denied. 11 million sales across the US and Europe, via sleekly efficient hip-hop anthems *In Da Club*, *21 Questions* and *P.I.M.P.*. A biography, a movie, videogames and clothing lines followed… then, bankruptcy. For some, it was everything wrong with hip-hop and the beginning of the end.

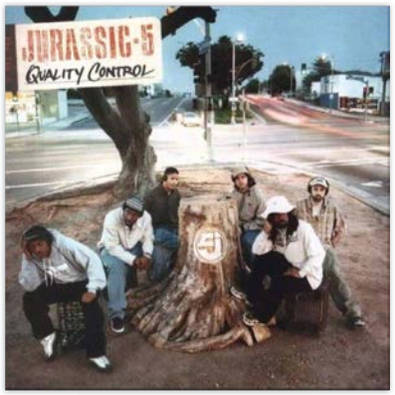
Discogs
£11-£44 (median £22)



33 THE MARSHALL MATHERS LP
EMINEM 2000

Credible white rappers remain a rare currency, but nearly everyone in hip-hop agrees Eminem is simply one of the best ever, regardless of genealogy. Another protégé of Dr. Dre, Eminem unleashed three classic LPs on the spin between 1999 and 2002, and this middle release captured his witty, irreverent wordplay best. The Dido-sampling *Stan* was the breakout hit of an often autobiographical triumph.

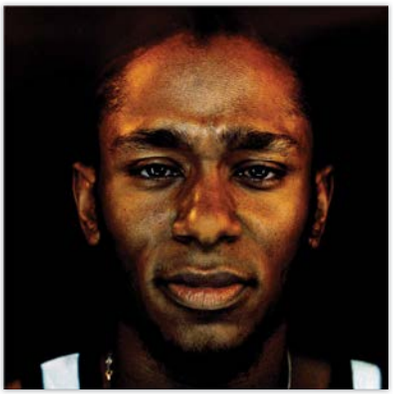
Discogs
£16-£40 (median £22)



32 QUALITY CONTROL
JURASSIC 5 2000

It took a full seven years for J5 to cut a full-length LP, but it was worth the wait. With their emphasis on turntablism, J5 recalled a decade or more before, and the tongue-twister rhymes from Zaakir, Chali 2na, Akil and Marc 7even were like a constantly revolving kaleidoscope. As a testimony to the pure skills of hip-hop, it was a life-affirming throwback – and put a smile back on the face of the genre.

Discogs
£9-£39 (median £21)



30 BLACK ON BOTH SIDES
MOS DEF 1999

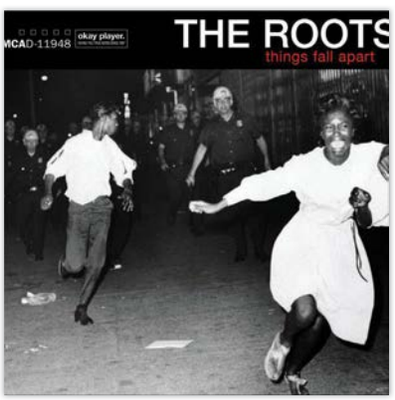
With its concerted effort to reinject some consciousness into a post-gangsta landscape, *BOBS* was ambitious stuff to begin with. Add Mos Def's forays into reggae, plus his singing and playing of bass, drums, congas, vibraphone and keyboards, and guest spots from Busta Rhymes and Q-Tip, and it turned into a tour-de-force. It remained underground to the mainstream, but sold a million copies to people who knew.

Discogs
£22-£70 (median £36)

28 SUPA DUPA FLY
MISSY 'MISDEMEANOUR' ELLIOTT 1997

Elliott and co-producer *du jour* Timbaland together delivered something genuinely new here – feminist, avant garde, playful hip-hop/R&B that still sounds futuristic. Its influence on R&B's digital grooves was huge and *The Rain (Supa Dupa Fly)*, *Sock It 2 Me* and *Beep Me 911* were pop smashes. After this, she really got her freak on, but this *Supa Dupa Fly* a brilliant debut.

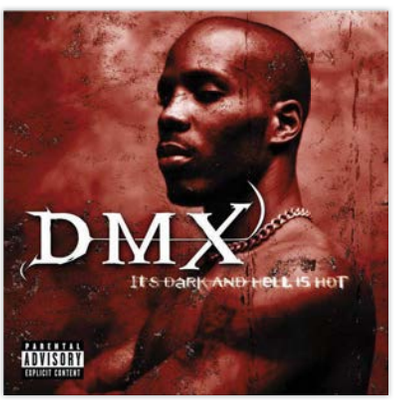
Discogs
£3-£61 (median £28)



31 THE ROOTS
THINGS FALL APART 1999

In a world often dominated by old breaks and repeating lyric themes, The Roots – a 'real' band – are leftfield outsiders. This career highlight (*You Got Me*, featuring Erykah Badu, won a Grammy) would never have made *Yo! MTV Raps*, but it is genuinely challenging, melding real drums, human beatboxing, limber jazz jams and raps about the state of rap. *Things Fall Apart*? Here, they came together beautifully.

Discogs
£11-£15 (median £28)



29 IT'S DARK AND HELL IS HOT
DMX 1998

Raw, brutal and dark indeed, DMX wasn't shaken by the turbulence of recent rap shootings – but he mixes his own ugly menace with his (claimed) devout Christianity, giving his persona the aura of some sort of hip-hop Johnny Cash. The LP's sparse, synthetic electronica felt new and shot it to No. 1. Movies, arrests, drugs, trauma, label lawsuits and jail followed with almost scripted inevitability.

Discogs
£6-£16 (median £10)

27 THE SCORE
FUGEES 1996

Was it hip-hop? Was it R&B? Was it pop? Even the mean streets needed some respite in '96, and Fugees were inescapable that year. The covers (*Killing Me Softly*; *No Woman, No Cry*) made *The Score* chart-friendly but underneath was a true hip-hop inventiveness almost impossible to dislike. *The Miseducation Of Lauryn Hill* (98) was even better – but that genius album was bigger than hip-hop itself.

Discogs
£15-£97 (median £33)

26 ENDTRODUCING.....
DJ SHADOW 1996

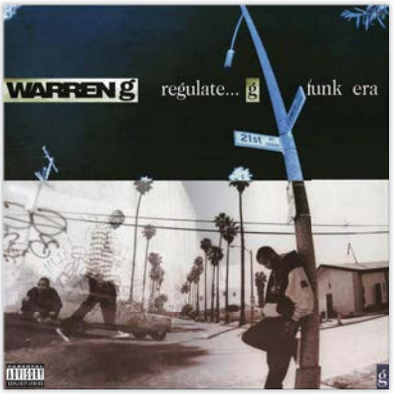
A whole album made up of samples off old LPs? Not even vocals? That's it? Yes, it is, but this is turntablism and sampling as high art, and set the mood for hip-hop's ambient soundscapes of today. It's roughly done, but equally true to hip-hop's roots and visionary at the same time. Track names aren't important, the ethos and mood is. The crate-diggin' nerds' own *Tubular Bells*.

Discogs
£25-£70 (median £35)

24 THE INFAMOUS...
MOBB DEEP 1995

Mobb Deep brought an eerie, sparse piano-led sound to East Coast beats on this second album, but what really gave the Queens projects duo their aura were their youth and (like Biggie) graphic stories: *The Infamous* paints a life in a gang warzone where violence and paranoia are the only rules and where there "ain't no thing as halfway crooks". Sounds like a soundtrack to a never-made crime movie.

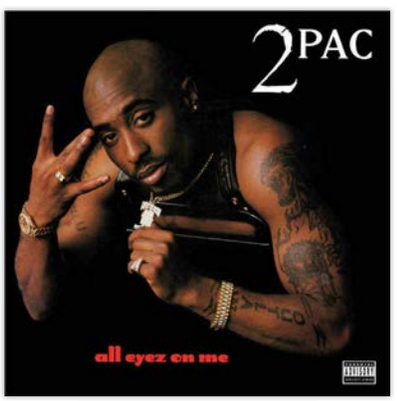
Discogs **£28-£140**
(median £46) (US version)



22 REGULATE... G FUNK ERA
WARREN G 1994

With G-funk in full swing on the West Coast, Dre kept empire building with his actual half-brother, Warren Griffin, also an ex-bandmate of Snoop. *Regulate* was gangsta sanitised, but delivered so masterfully, it went down a storm. Cali, blunts, girls, low-rides, sunshine and sampling Michael McDonald... *Regulate* was ghetto-life good times through a soft-focus lens.

Discogs
£15-£53 (median £29)



25 ALL EYEZ ON ME
2PAC 1996

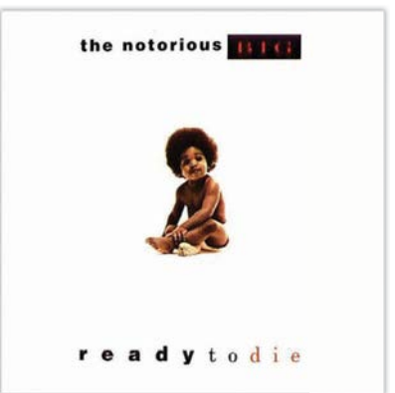
Hip-hop doubles are generally bloated, yet even at four LPs, *All Eyez On Me* was justified. After jail time, Tupac Shakur went full-on gangsta and simultaneously conquered the mainstream with *California Love* and the title track. Its 'forbidden fruit' crossover appeal is obvious – with 904 profanities, it's the most cussin' album *ever* made – and *Hit 'Em Up* elevated the East-West war. Pac was shot dead, too. You knew that.

Discogs **£10-£200**
(median £114) US version

23 LABCABIN CALIFORNIA
THE PHARCYDE 1995

Even with its mid-90s mired in violence, hip-hop could still surprise. Recalling kindred spririts ATCQ, The Pharcyde's second album (after *Bizarre Ride II...*) was even more irreverent, clever and cosmopolitan – Spike Jonze's backwards video for *Drop* helped mainstream exposure, but the whole of *Labcabincalifornia* (*Hey You*, *Moment In Time*)... is refreshingly out there. They split soon after, but this was some sign-off.

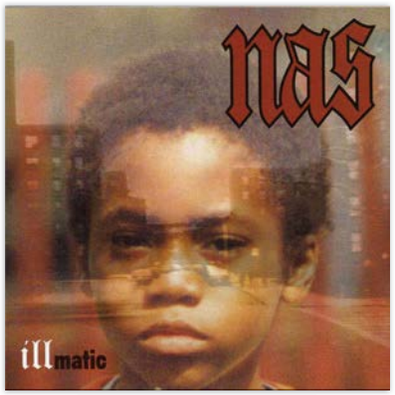
Discogs **£11-£53**
(median £24) US version



21 READY TO DIE
NOTORIOUS B.I.G. 1994

Biggie's fame is inevitably elevated by his death, but he had a real knack for playing out his rhymes like scenes in a (very ugly) movie, and elevated East Coast gangsta when LA largely ruled. *Gimme The Loot*, *Things Done Changed* and the title track were indelible pieces of ghetto noir and, for a while, it made him and Sean 'Puffy' Coombs hip-hop's hottest duo. Biggie was shot dead. Of course.

Discogs
£13-£31 (median £24)



20 ILLMATIC
NAS 1994

With DJs *du jour* Premier, Q-Tip and Pete Rock on beats duty, Nasir Jones emerged fully as an old-school storyteller who was also highly literate, questioning and not without vulnerability. *N.Y. State Of Mind* and *The World Is Yours* led a brief 40 minutes of packed quality – varied, but it held together – and the sleeve photo of Nas as a kid belied the maturity of its 21-year-old author.

Discogs
£11-£59 (median £18)

18 ENTER THE WU-TANG (36 CHAMBERS)
WU-TANG CLAN 1993

The dawning of a dynasty, *…36 Chambers* brought a whole new lyrical and musical language to hip-hop. Its sparse, gritty beats rolled back previous jazzy years, while the Clan's multiple personalities were inventive and prescient. It still sounds strangely eerie: who else wrote hits called *Da Mystery Of Chessboxin'*? It introduced RZA as a true production master.

Discogs
£20-£35 (median £25)

16 Mecca And The Soul Brother
PETE ROCK & C.L. SMOOTH 1992

One for true hip-hop heads, *Mecca…* is 80 minutes long, but still compelling for Pete Rock's peerless production (his use of beefy organ riffs, cymbal rides and horn loops is a signature). C.L. Smooth is no passenger, covering all ground and, in *Lots Of Lovin*, he's even romantic – the oddest of taboos for the time. It's not a religious album *per se*, but it still sounds positively spiritual.

Discogs
£4-£31 (median £19)

19 DOGGYSTYLE
SNOOP DOGG 1993

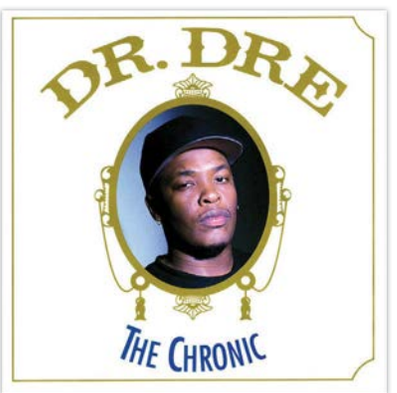
Already a star after *The Chronic*, Snoop (assisted by Dre) simply continued his languid gangsta and ganja tales on his full solo debut, and *Doggystyle* really is all about his delivery – he's got one of rap's most melodic voices. It doesn't even try to dig obscure samples or be clever with words, as *Gin And Juice* and *Who Am I? (What's My Name?)* earned it a debut at No. 1 in the Billboard chart.

Discogs
£17-£97 (median £35)

17 BLACK SUNDAY
CYPRESS HILL 1993

Beer and pop (music) had helped Beastie Boys and De La Soul click in the white 'burbs, but a huge, fat blunt made Cypress Hill even more popular. *Black Sunday* was probably the biggest crossover hip-hop album to that date, enlivened (just about) by B-Real and Sen Dog's comedic voices, rock samples and heavy metal-esque art. *Insane In The Brain* was huge; even Bill Clinton would've inhaled to this one.

Discogs
£15-£44 (median £22)



15 THE CHRONIC
DR. DRE 1992

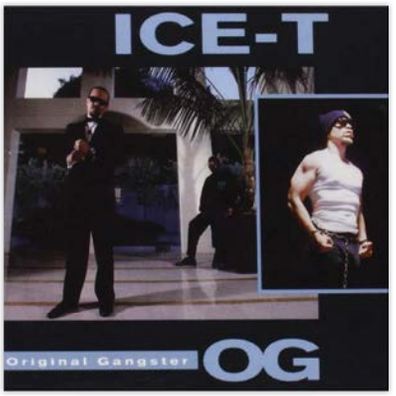
With NWA splintering, Dre wasted no time in building his reputation. Its use of bassy synths and Parliament/Funkadelic ushered in a new recipe – G-Funk – and made Dr. Dre an unlikely star. The lyrics of main guest rapper Snoop Doggy Dogg (sic) aren't all that, but for its cinematic production and pop savvy alone, *The Chronic* was a game-changer. That's right, that 'Beats headphones guy' once made records.

Discogs **£19-£186 (median £66) US version**

14 STEP IN THE ARENA
GANG STARR 1991

Like ATCQ, Gang Starr delved into jazz and slow funk for beats and breaks and delivered one of the outwardly smoothest albums of the era. Premier was/is one of hip-hop's greatest producers and old-school scratch DJs, and The Guru's silky monotone makes this a snugly enveloping album, with *Just To Get A Rep* and *Who's Gonna Take The Weight?* taking the New Yorkers from underground to stardom.

Discogs
£12-£45 (median £31)



12 O.G. ORIGINAL GANGSTA
ICE-T 1991

The ex-Crips member born Tracy Lauren Marrow has never been the most acclaimed of MCs, but on his best album by far, Ice nails it. His lyrics aren't particularly poetic, but his flow is superb, his thug-life vignettes compelling and the sonic clarity is outstanding. It's stacked with classics (*The Tower*, *New Jack Hustler…*, *Midnight*) and introduced his rap-metal troupe Body Count.

Discogs
£4-£36 (median £17)

10 PAUL'S BOUTIQUE
BEASTIE BOYS 1989

The Beasties' *Licensed To Ill* debut may have had the charm of a lift-fart, but its three-years-in-the-making follow-up showed they actually had vision and talent. The trio's rhymes were still shrill, but it was the rainbow tapestry of cut-ups (aided by The Dust Brothers) on *The Sounds Of Science*, *B-Boy Bouillabaisse* et al that surprised. A benchmark in sampleology. That's right, it was now a word.

Discogs
£9-£150 (median £28)

18 THE LOW END THEORY
A TRIBE CALLED QUEST 1991

Too many Tribe albums, too many classics, frankly. But we'll give this head-nodder the nod. With Phife pushed to the fore alongside Q-Tip, it simply bubbles in its own brilliance. Its jazz-spinning beats are low-riders indeed, and *Check The Rhime*, *Buggin' Out* and the posse-cut *Scenario* (which broke Busta Rhymes) are slam-dunks. Among the Native Tongues posse, Tribe ruled supreme.

Discogs
£15-£80 (median £47)

11 DEATH CERTIFICATE
ICE CUBE 1991

Cube left N.W.A in a rage, and here he's seething about everything: 'Amerikkka', pop dance ("You can new jack swiiiiiing on my nutz!"), N.W.A, N.W.A's manager, Korean shopkeepers, the LAPD, and, oh, getting woken up early. And with his new Lench Mob's beats banging over *Death* and *Life* sides, it's musically explosive, too. Hardcore. Cube made it clear: this was not an album for white people.

Discogs
£7-£34 (median £20)

9 3 FEET HIGH AND RISING
DE LA SOUL 1989

De La Soul rose perfectly timed for the mainstream ascent of a luvved-up generation. The LP's skits were fresh, Prince Paul's production was magpie-like (Hall & Oates became dope), and it was shot through with sunshine rather than bullets. Hamstrung by too many "*Sgt. Pepper…* of hip-hop" epithets, the formula was ripped up straight after. That's what hip-hop sometimes does – tricks your mind, then kicks your ass.

Discogs
£4-£30 (median £15)

8 THE GREAT ADVENTURES OF...

SLICK RICK 1988

The Richard Pryor of rap, Slick Rick (originally from London) dumped vulgar comedy on a fast-politicising scene. There's no denying Ricky Walter's lyrical skills, character turns or pioneering storytelling prowess, for sure, nor the album's overall ingenuity. He remains one of hip-hop's most sampled MCs for lunatic classics such as *Children's Story*, *The Ruler's Back* and, ahem, *Treat Her Like A Prostitute*. 'He's *observing*, yo' honour', goes the defence.

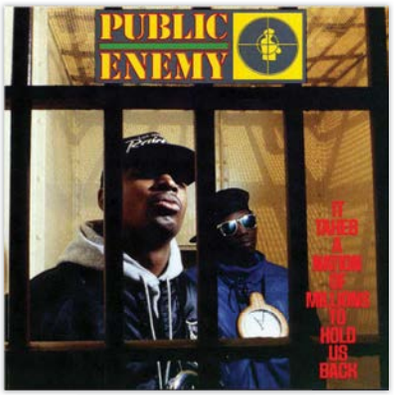
Discogs
£6-£19 (median £13)

7 STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON

N.W.A 1988

If PE were hip-hop's politicised rallymen, N.W.A were the rioters tearing up outside. This debut LP's brutal opening triptych of the title cut, *Fuck Tha Police* and *Gangsta* caused uproar that not even the chart smarts of *Express Yourself* would balm. Behind Ice Cube and Eazy-E's pottymouths, Dr. Dre emerged as a new alchemist of funkology, cutting a lean, mean soundtrack to middle America's worst nightmare. News just in: N.W.A don't give a fuck. No, really.

Discogs
£13-£4 (median £30)



6 IT TAKES A NATION OF MILLIONS TO HOLD US BACK

PUBLIC ENEMY 1988

Hip-hop's first great polemicists. Whether it was their media awareness ("Hip-hop is the black CNN"), strategies (Chuck D wrote song titles first) or Chuck and Flavor Flav's Blackman vs Joker tag-teaming, PE was a masterstoke: brothers, whiteys, TV, labels – no-one was spared. Add the Bomb Squad's *musique concrète* sampling and you had a truly monumental LP that sounded like nothing else. Bring the noise!

Discogs
£1-£20 (median £10)

Listen With Mother, F**kers

Hip-hop, pottymouths and Explicit Content stickers

The PMRC (Parents Music Resource Center) was founded in the mid 80s, publicly led by Tipper Gore, wife of future US Vice President Al Gore. The PMRC sought to standardise warnings for parents and guardians of 'explicit' content in all music but, of course, hip-hop has kept it extra busy. It's a long story, but in summary…

- The first hip-hop album to carry any sort of 'Parental Advisory' sticker (on the plastic shrinkwrap sleeve) was Ice-T's debut, *Rhyme Pays* (1987).
- The now familiar black/white badge 'Parental Advisory' was introduced in summer 1990. The first album to carry that was 2 Live Crew's *Banned In The U.S.A.*
- In 1996, 'Explicit Lyrics' was changed to 'Explicit Content'.
- Hats off to besttickets.com, whose staff put in the legwork for a whole study on profanity in hip-hop, 1985 to 2013. They only studied what they deemed "important" records, but in what they proudly dub *The Best F**kin' Article You'll Read Today* (ha!), they deduce:

– 2Pac's *All Eyez On Me* (1996) is the most profane album in total: 904 occurrences.

– Too $hort's *Raw, Uncut & X-Rated* (1986) is the most regularly profane, clocking 49.8 curse words per track.

– 2001 was "the most profane year in rap"(!)

- Accusations of racism or anti-hip-hop bias have surfaced with regularity. An example? Jon Spencer Blues Explosion's *Now I Got Worry* (1996) contains roughly 32 F-bombs in one song called *Fuck Shit Up*. It didn't even get stickered.

WARNING: PROFANITY

5 CRITICAL BEATDOWN

ULTRAMAGNETIC MC'S 1988

Never mainstream, but in Kool Keith (later aka Dr Octagon and Dr Dooom), The Ultramagnetics had a surrealist MC who genuinely brought art to supposedly 'simple' street poetry. Although often unintelligible, Keith's internal rhyming style was a key force for Eminem, while the Ultras' beats and breaks were on a par with the dense attack of Public Enemy. Sadly, KK's probably most famous for being sampled (The Prodigy's *Smack My Bitch Up*).

Discogs
£13-£28 (median £20)

4 CRIMINAL MINDED

BOOGIE DOWN PRODUCTIONS 1987

Widely considered the first boom in 'gangsta', the cover had KRS-One and DJ Scott La Rock posing with weapons. It's more than just unsettling stories about robberies, gang warfare and crack whores, though – KRS-One's ragga chat was also highly influential, as were the clanking, skeletal beats. It sounds dated now, but at the time, this was a genuine gut-punch and Scott La Rock's fatal shooting the same year only increased the legend.

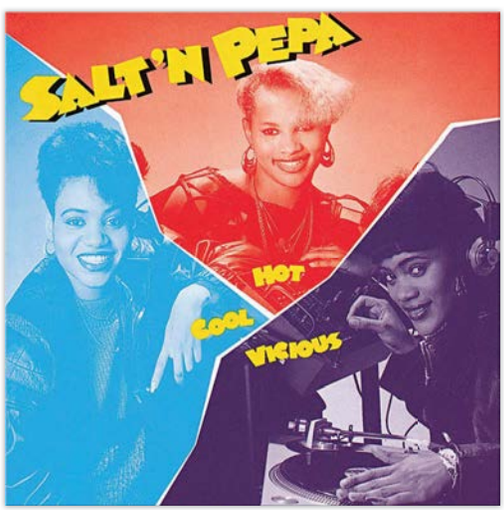
Discogs
£12-£37 (median £19)

3 PAID IN FULL

ERIC B. & RAKIM 1987

One of the first great DJ/MC pairings, with Rakim still judged by many to be the greatest microphone fiend ever. The title track (remixed by Coldcut) and *I Know You Got Soul* (remixed by Norman Cook) later gave them chart hits, and even if this isn't even the duo's best album (see *Follow The Leader*) it was a great leap forward. The so-called 'golden era' is on.

Discogs
£5-£26 (median £15)



2 HOT, COOL & VICIOUS

SALT-N-PEPA 1986

Hip-hop has never made it easy for women, but Salt-N-Pepa's taboo-busting LP debut wasn't just a commercial landmark (the first female rap LP to go platinum), it was also decent. Sure, it was all masterminded by producer Hurby Azor, even down to many of the rhymes, but it's fun, sassy, clean and cute… with a quality man-putdown in *Tramp*. Post-album No. 1 hit *Push It* made it onto 1987 pressings onwards.

Discogs
£2-£11 (median £7)

1 RUN-D.M.C.

RUN-D.M.C. 1984

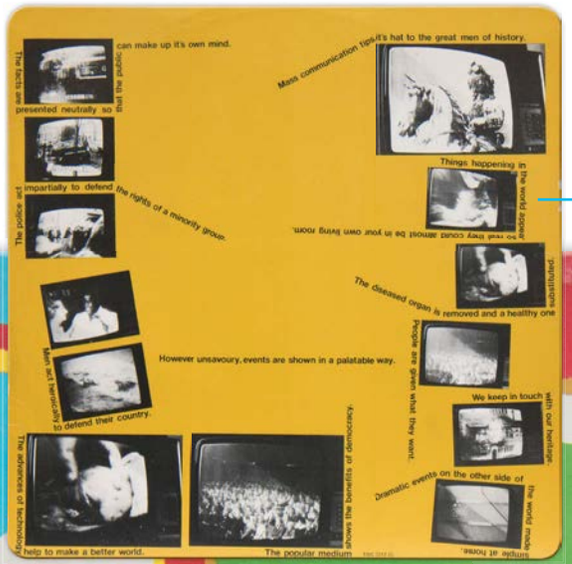
Big Bang time LP-wise, with the Hollis, Queens trio of Russell 'Run' Simmons, Daryl 'D.M.C.' McDaniel and Jam Master Jay (Jason Mizell) throwing out beats and rhymes that would define 80s hip-hop. A minimal electro influence is strong, but there's real staying power here. *It's Like That*, *Sucker MCs*, *Hard Times* and the groundbreaking *Rock Box* remain classics. Quite possibly the prime reason ageing B-boys still buy in Sports Direct (Kangol, y'all!). ●

Discogs
£8-£30 (median £13)

Classic Album
GANG OF FOUR
ENTERTAINMENT!

On their wildly influential debut album, Gang Of Four stepped forward to create a jarring, funky post-punk masterpiece that was the pitch-perfect distillation of their socio-political beliefs and anti-rock stance, as **Gary Tipp** discovers…

GANG OF FOUR
entertainment!
The Indian smiles, he thinks that the cowboy is his friend.
The cowboy smiles, he is glad the Indian is fooled.
Now he can exploit him.



DOGMATIC FOR THE PEOPLE

The sleeve art was designed by Jon King and Andy Gill, and doffs its hat to the Situationist International group. The album's back cover shows a family whose obese father says: "I spend most of our money on myself so that I can stay fat," while the mother and children declare: "We're grateful for his leftovers." It's safe to say they don't make them like that anymore…

GANG OF FOUR (PRODUCERS)

The inner-sleeve notes thank John Peel, among others, say 'Hello' to the Mekons and list the producers as Gill, King, Rob Warr and Rick Walton

With the dust now settled, it's clear that punk rock wasn't the beginning of a glorious new chapter, but rather an emphatic full stop. In the registers of music history, the gob-splattered movement will go down as a resplendently vital kick up the ruling rock establishment's complacent backside, but, ultimately, its retro leanings towards rock 'n' roll revivalism were hardly breaking any new ground.

What's more, punk had more or less burnt itself out by the middle of 1977 and its long tail was struggling to produce any music of real consequence. The paragraph opener for the glorious new chapter was, in fact, the scene that followed it: post-punk.

Gang Of Four were at the forefront of this post-punk scene, alongside such sonic luminaries as Public Image Ltd, Pere Ubu, Siouxsie And The Banshees, The Fall, Wire, Magazine, Joy Division and Talking Heads.

As a direct reaction against the one-chord simplicity of punk and the self-indulgent rock that came before it, these new groups feverishly experimented with fusing together any number of different musical styles, such as funk, dub, dance, jazz and even disco. "Rock is obsolete," snarled Public Image's ferocious bassist Jah Wobble at the time. Few would want to argue with him.

As rock critic, cultural commentator and early Gang Of Four champion Greil Marcus was quick to point out: "The difference was, with each of these groups you could hear people thinking, trying to figure things out, as you listened to their songs. It was as though they were talking to themselves, and at the same time trying to speak to other people. It was tremendously exciting."

Determined to make a clean and decisive break away from predictable rock influences, the post-punk band's conceptual horizons were far broader and much richer than your average one-chord wonder in bondage trousers. Typically, they were inspired by avant-garde sensibilities and very happy to cherry pick ideas from fine art, European cinema, literature, philosophy and radical politics.

In certain quarters, debate still rages hotly about which band made the first decisive post-punk record. Magazine's debut single *Shot By Both Sides* was released in January 1978 and has a strong claim – so too does Siouxsie's *Hong Kong Garden* (August 1978), while the release of *Public Image,* PiL's first 45, in October 1978, was a powerful statement of intent.

Gang Of Four producer Bob Last was convinced the band's *Damaged Goods* EP, released in the same month as the latter, was post-punk's definitive game changer. "Not to take anything away from PiL – that was a very powerful gesture for John Lydon to go in that direction – but the die had already been cast. The postmodern idea of toying with convention in rock: we claim that."

STANCE AND SENSIBILITIES

Naming the band provocatively after the leadership faction in the Chinese Communist Party, singer Jon King and guitarist Andy Gill were schoolmates from Sevenoaks, who went to Leeds University together. It was there, in the radical hotbed of the Fine Art Department, where they teamed up with drummer Hugo Burnham and, eventually, bassist Dave Allen, to form Gang Of Four.

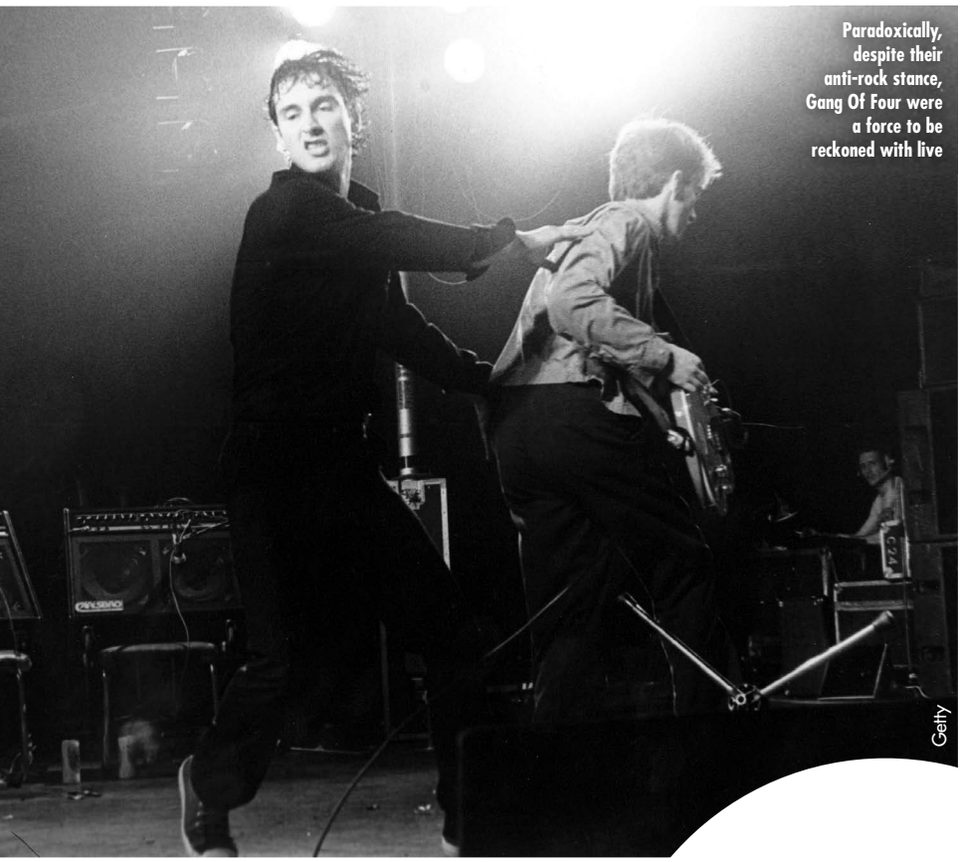
If ever a group were to be awarded a distinction for ticking the most boxes on the 'what makes a post-punk band?' questionnaire, it would be them. From the very outset of the band's existence, they embraced a fiercely anti-rock stance and adopted aspects of funk and dub into their sound. What's more, they were more than motivated to flirt with

Sphere Of Influence #1

"We opened for Gang Of Four and worked with them, and I lifted plenty of things wholesale from that band – from the way they looked onstage to the way the singer used phrasing and musical instruments at the same time."

Michael Stipe, R.E.M.

Getty


Paradoxically, despite their anti-rock stance, Gang Of Four were a force to be reckoned with live

Getty

Marxist politics (courtesy of the Frankfurt School) and were heavily informed by prominent European thinkers, such as German dramatist Bertolt Brecht, Italian polemicist Antonio Gramsci and social revolutionaries Situationist International (SI). Dressed in plain shirts and utilitarian trousers, Duran Duran they most definitely were not.

The pursuit of something new and cliché-free made the group challenge all the traditional baggage that came with being a guitar band. Famously, Gill and Allen once attempted to beat the living crap out of each other after the bassist had dared to place his foot on a monitor during a gig, an act that the revisionist guitarist violently disapproved of for its blatant rock connotations.

"We were trying to invent a new kind of music, a new kind of language," Gill said of *Entertainment!* "We were using the building blocks of 'rock music', 'funk music' and 'pop music', dismantling them to see what was there and using what we felt like using."

Jamming was another rock custom that was rigorously forbidden under any circumstances. "Everything was thought out in advance," said Gill. "No jamming." To further emphasise the anti-rockstar stance, rumour has it the roadies were paid more than the band during the early tours.

Recorded at the Workhouse Studio on the Old Kent Road and released in September 1979, the band's debut album on major-label EMI, *Entertainment!* was the pitch-perfect execution of Gang Of Four's sound, stance and sensibilities. It exists now, as it did then, as a striking product of what the group believed in. Adhering strictly to the band's manifesto of "No corny lyrics, no obvious melodies and no change of key," it was received well critically on both sides of the pond, but commercial sales were not exactly going to make them unlikely tax exiles. As music critic and author Simon Reynolds described the album in his post-punk history, *Rip It Up And Start Again*: "It's one of post-punk's defining masterworks, every aspect of the record – the lyrics, the music, the artwork – is perfectly aligned."

JARRING PUNK-FUNK

Gang Of Four's jagged, jarring, slashing, choppy (insert extra adjective if necessary) punk-funk sound on *Entertainment!* may have been a calculated rejection of what had gone before, but the band's guitar sound actually owed a big debt to Canvey Island's finest pub-rocking axeman, Wilko Johnson. As Gill said in a recent interview: "Seeing Wilko and Dr. Feelgood was a real lightbulb moment. He never stopped looking at the audience and didn't spend much time looking at his guitar. That robotic, machine-like thing the whole band had, that sort of riffing. It was almost like an electronic take on Steve Reich or something."

The band's ideological egalitarian beliefs informed the sonic setup on *Entertainment!*. "It's democratic music, where we don't have a star thing," Jon King told *Sounds* back in 1978. This is true of some of the album's greatest moments – such as *Natural's Not In It* and *Return The Gift* – where, exhilaratingly, the guitar, bass and drums drive as one immense rhythmic unit. Dave Allen put it best in an interview with the *NME*: "Gang Of Four doesn't believe in the individual."

The last thing Gill wanted to be regarded as was an axe hero, as the band as a unit was vitally important to Gang Of Four. Paradoxically, for all the anti-rock posturing, the band were all fans of 70s rock band Free, whose heavily

"Seeing Wilko and Dr. Feelgood was a real lightbulb moment... it was like an electronic take on Steve Reich"

ANDY GILL

Getty

Five Vital Post-Punk 45s

SHOT BY BOTH SIDES
Magazine
Howard Devoto was first in line when it came to being disillusioned with the nascent punk movement and jumped ship from the Buzzcocks soon after recording the legendary *Spiral Scratch* EP. He left to form Magazine, and the band's debut 45 was a thing of paranoid wonder.

PUBLIC IMAGE
Public Image Limited
Johnny Rotten became John Lydon and went about creating music more to his own experimental taste. The thunderous debut single addresses his pent-up feelings of exploitation ("I'm not the same as when I began/ I will not be treated like property").

HONG KONG GARDEN
Siouxsie And The Banshees
The Banshees very quickly outgrew the punk scene that inspired them, as their classic debut single was light years away from the movement's trademark gob and grunt. It reached No. 7 on the UK singles charts and blazed a trail for post-punk.

OUTDOOR MINER
Wire
The may have been in and around punk from the outset, but Wire were a post-punk band in waiting. *Outdoor Miner* captures perfectly their intellectual essence and is based around the life cycle of the serpentine leaf-miner insect. Extra points for having a copy on white vinyl.

TYPICAL GIRLS
The Slits
After cutting their teeth touring the UK with The Clash, it was time for The Slits to redefine their raw live sound and become post-punk pioneers. *Typical Girls* is a wonderfully inventive pop song, paired with their semi-sacrilegious take on *I Heard It Through The Grapevine*.

rhythmic, stripped-down sound held an appeal; but the boy/girl narrative of their songs certainly did not. As Gill explains: "You could say Free influenced Gang Of Four, but our approach was: 'Take that bit, but leave that ridiculous bit out'." Dub reggae was also a huge stimulus for the album's sound and informed a fondness for creating space in the songs. "Instead of guitar solos, we had anti-solos, where you stopped playing, just left a hole. Valve amplifiers were verboten. They're the prerequisite for a 'fat' rock tone, that 'warmth' that people talk about. I had transistorised amps – a more brittle, cleaner sound, and colder. Gang Of Four were against warmth."

Gang Of Four (l to r): Hugo Burnham, Dave Allen, Andy Gill and Jon King

POLITICAL WITH A SMALL 'P'

King wrote the majority of the lyrics on *Entertainment!* and the songs' narrative content also shaped the band's collective approach and cold-blooded sociopolitical aesthetic. The deliberate lack of a personal creative vision, of any real first-person emotion, led them to an oblique objectivity and a canvas onto which they

The songs

Personnel
Jon King Lead vocals, melodica
Andy Gill Guitar, vocals
Hugo Burnham Drums
Dave Allen Bass

Produced by
Andy Gill, Jon King, Rob Warr and Rick Walton

Recorded
The Workhouse Studio, Old Kent Road, London; May to June 1979

Released
September 1979

1 *ETHER*
The first sound you hear on *Entertainment!* is the heavy twang of Dave Allen's punk-funk bass, followed by the hypnotic rush of Hugo Burnham's drums and Andy Gill's lead-played-as-rhythm guitar. Then a clever dual-vocal pattern, with Jon King and Gill taking alternate lines and singing about two seemingly unrelated subject matters. In true Frankfurt School style, King commentates on the illusory power of consumerism in a capitalist society ("Trapped in a heaven lifestyle/ New looking out for pleasure/ The happy ever after/ It's at the end of the rainbow"), while Gill spits out the album's only overtly big 'P' political statement about the British torture of IRA prisoners in Northern Ireland ("Locked in Long Kesh/ H-block torture/ White noise/ In a white room"). We already mentioned this was no *Girls On Film*, didn't we? The juxtaposition of the two isn't obvious, but its execution is utterly memorable.

2 *NATURAL'S NOT IN IT*
Gang Of Four's visceral rhythmic groove is set in motion and a monster riff ensues, as King returns to an already familiar and central theme of the album, the individual's alienation in a consumerist society ("This heaven gives me migraine"). Specifically, questions of sex, desire and relationships – as verse four obliquely and unromantically explains: "Fornication makes you happy/ No escape from society/ Natural is not in it, your relations are of power/ We all have good intentions, but all with strings attached." Bravely, but perhaps unwisely, director Sofia Coppola used the track in the title sequence of her patchy 2006 movie *Marie Antoinette*. It also featured in an Xbox ad for the not-very-Marxist Microsoft.

3 *NOT GREAT MEN*
The last track written for the album, *Not Great Men* is a punky, funky, tough song about how history is written and, subsequently, consumed. It opposes the popular 19th-century idea of 'great man theory', which states history can be largely explained by the impact of great men or heroes. As Simon Reynolds recounts: "On a more meta-critical level, *Not Great Men* challenges history written from the standpoint of heroic individuals like kings and generals, while ignoring the little people who build palaces and fight

The songs *continued*

wars ("No weak men in the books at home"). It's one of three tracks on the album to feature King's melodica. Sock-wearing bass player Flea was to say of the song: "The groove laid down by the Burnham-Gill-Allen-King connection on *Not Great Men* is the first thing I put on my turntable to show somebody what shaped the sound of the rookie Red Hot Chili Peppers."

4 *DAMAGED GOODS*

Sexual politics are once again dissected ("Your kiss so sweet/ Your sweet so sour") on the title track of the band's genre-defining EP, which was re-recorded for the album. It was inspired by an in-store slogan in a Morrisons supermarket in Leeds, in King's words: "Saturday afternoons, we wandered through the sun-bright aisles, looking for 2-4-1 bargains and generic baked beans. The hopeless in-store slogan at the point of sale was: 'The change will do you good', meaning 'change' as in money and 'change' as in switch store. Someone got paid for this rubbish! I found this a good starter for words about a doomed relationship where leg-over had become, maybe, too much of a good thing." The copywriting may have been laughable, but it inspired one of Gang Of Four's greatest moments on vinyl. A defining post-punk classic.

5 *RETURN THE GIFT*

Gill's guitar is set to 'post-punk angular' as it introduces the track with a series of siren calls, before the rhythm section joins in to bring the funk. King, ever the rigorous intellectual, explores the theme of depersonalisation and commodification of individuals into objects of trade, through a series of clichéd advertising slogans ("It's on the price list/ You're on the market"). The concept of commodification has its origins in Marxist political theory and is used to describe the process by which market values can be utilised to replace other social values.

Sphere Of Influence #2

"I was already playing bass by then and listening to people like Hendrix. But when I heard *Entertainment!*, I knew at that moment what I wanted my music to sound like. My young mind was blown. I remember jumping up out of my seat and bursting into a fit of crazy dancing. It completely changed the way I looked at rock music. I liked the idea that a band could express this almost violent aggression without necessarily playing loud or fast, but just through these incredible tones and arrangements and the way things were placed."

Flea, Red Hot Chili Peppers

6 *GUNS BEFORE BUTTER*

The closing track of Side One takes its title from Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels' infamous rallying cry: "One cannot shoot with butter, but with guns." It demonstrates the relationship between a nation's investment in defence and civilian goods from the standpoint of a faint-hearted protagonist who remains unconvinced by the rhetoric and clearly enjoys a bit of butter on his toast ("I hear some talk of guns and butter/ That's something we can do without"). It's also a showcase for the fantastic flow of Burnham's syncopated drum patterns.

7 *I FOUND THAT ESSENCE RARE*

Side Two opens on a relatively breezy note with what, by Gang Of Four standards, is a fairly straightforward, catchy pop song, not a million miles away from the Buzzcocks. EMI were keen to release the track as the first single off the album, but the band were having none of it. As King explained in a 2009 interview with journalist Robin Murray: "Never missing a chance to miss a chance, we said no way, the song was too commercial (duh!) and wasn't representative. We refused the release and succeeded in pissing off our A&R team and label manager." Scratch the surface and the song isn't quite as breezy as it seems… King again: "It summed up that lonely desire we all have to find something permanent and real and transformational in the middle of the relentless, oppressive programming and oppression we go through. Somehow, we all end up doing, thinking and believing the same things – but knowing at the same time it's all lies and a conspiracy."

8 *GLASS*

Possibly the least successful track on the album, and one of the major reasons is that it, somewhat offputtingly, actually contains a melody (and quite a pretty one at that). The song itself is concerned with ennui, the mind-numb of everyday existence. The point is hammered home with repetitious lyrics zoning in on mundane activities.

9 *CONTRACT*

Relationships and sexual politics fall under Gang Of Four's mighty deconstructivist hammer in *Contract,* where marriage is seen strictly in the depersonalised terms of a business agreement ("Is this really the way it is/ Or a contract in our mutual interest") and then moves into the uncomfortable area of sex and how the reality differs from the consumerist ideal ("These social dreams/ Put in practice in the bedroom/ Is this so private?/ Our struggle in the bedroom"). If you were going to pick a Gang Of Four song to walk down the aisle to, this wouldn't be the one.

10 *AT HOME HE'S A TOURIST*

Sonically, this is one of the great, quintessential Gang Of Four tracks, with Gill's guitar spitting and squawling over a tight, metronomic rhythm supplied by Burnham and King. A song about how commodity capitalism offers organised leisure and entertainment as replacements for genuine satisfaction, *At Home He's A Tourist* was the first single off the album and Gang of Four's 'big' hit single. It reached No. 58 in the UK Singles Chart, the highest position of any of the band's songs. But it could have been different if they hadn't pulled out of a *Top Of The Pops* appearance at the last minute. The show's producers objected to the line: "The rubbers you hide in your top left pocket" (part of a verse about nightclubs making money through selling sex), and suggested "rubbers" be changed to "rubbish". Needless to say, the band declined – though they were open to changing the lyric to "packets", which was rejected. As Burnham later reflected: "We were all as one on that decision, and it felt great. But in retrospect, walking off *Top Of The Pops* essentially killed our career."

11 *5.45*

While hardly a dub track by any stretch, Jamaican music was an inspiration to Gang Of Four. Augustus Pablo is the genre's greatest melodica player, but King gives it a deferential stab on *5.45*. The album's penultimate track concerns itself with the desensitising effect of media news coverage on the viewer. With war presented as something that's passively consumed, the song uses: "Guerilla war struggle is the new entertainment" as its closing refrain.

12 *ANTHRAX*

Entertainment!'s closer is one of the great Gang Of Four songs. It was originally found on the *Damaged Goods* EP and re-recorded for the album. Anthrax is a cold analytical construct where love is regarded as incapacitating folly ("And I feel like a beetle on its back/ There's no way for me to get up/ Love will get you like a case of Anthrax/ And that's something I don't want to catch"). As King explains: "This was the first song Andy and I wrote where we felt we'd got to where we wanted to be. We were big fans of Godard's movies, and loved the split screens. It seemed like a modern way to describe things, how stories can't always be decoded from a single point of view and, among all the conflicting narratives, a story's sense changes depending on where you sit."

Sphere Of Influence #3

"Nirvana started as a Gang Of Four and Scratch Acid rip-off."

Kurt Cobain listed *Entertainment!* 13th in his Top 50 favourite albums

could happily apply their mini-manifestos about the paradoxes of modern life.

As Simon Reynolds explained: "The songs depicted relationships and situations in diagrammatic fashion… using the scalpel of Marxist analysis to dissect the mystifications of love, 'capitalist democracy' and rock itself." A post-rational Gill saw it this way: "We looked at our lives and the lives of our friends and came up with a simple rather than simplistic view of modern capitalism. I mean, we didn't tell anyone to go and smash WHSmith's windows."

WITHOUT THE COWBOY OUTFITS

Unfortunately, Gang Of Four never scaled the peaks of *Entertainment!* again and underwent a gradual and messy break-up. The dogmatic template of the first album was largely ditched on the follow-up, *Solid Gold*, as the band, paradoxically, succumbed to a more conventional hard-rocking sound that replicated the intensity of their live performances. The album flopped in the UK, but made a deep, lasting and influential mark in America.

The band perform at Poplar Creek Music Theater, Illinois, in 1991, as part of an incongruous bill shared by Public Enemy, Sisters Of Mercy and Warrior Soul

As Burnham said: "Countless times in the States, people would come up to me after gigs and say: 'I read the *NME* interview and I thought you'd be really boring'. They were taken aback because we fucking rocked, rather than standing around in long macs looking miserable, like your typical post-punk band. It's the same reason The Clash were so successful in America. And we were The Clash without the cowboy outfits."

Allen jumped ship first and formed funk-punk band Shriekback with Barry Andrews, formerly of XTC. He was followed by Burnham, who worked as a session drummer (ABC, PiL) before moving into A&R at Island Records. He is now an associate professor at the New England Institute Of Art in Boston.

King and Gill soldiered on, disbanding then reuniting on an irregular basis. In 2004, the original line-up reformed and toured the UK once and the States twice, as well as playing shows in Europe and Japan. In October 2005, Gang Of Four released a new disc featuring fresh recordings of songs from *Entertainment!*, *Solid Gold* and *Songs Of The Free*, entitled *Return The Gift*.

Andy Gill is now a noted producer of albums by Red Hot Chili Peppers, The Jesus Lizard, The Stranglers, Killing Joke, The Futureheads and Michael Hutchence. He still tours with a repackaged Gang Of Four as the original member. Jon King, no longer in the band, works in consulting, broadcast television and the media.

Yet it'd be wrong to sign off with talk of the band as individuals, as they once formed a mighty, punky-funky collective and what they truly leave behind as their legacy is the hugely influential post-punk masterpiece entitled *Entertainment!* ●

Damaged Goods EP

Before *Entertainment!* there was the *Damaged Goods* EP (Fast Records, 1978). It had three tracks: *Damaged Goods*, *Love Like Anthrax* (both re-recorded for the album) and *Armalite Rifle*. Its punk-funk fusion was influential in the development of post-punk.

FIRE RECORDS
PHOENIX FROM THE FLAMES

How do you bring an ill-starred, maverick, defunct record label back to life? **Chris Parkin** talks to Fire Records boss James Nicholls about how he resurrected a beloved institution from his youth and restored it to its rightful place, as a force to be reckoned with in the indie world...

James Nicholls is speaking to us from his home in Stoke Newington. It also happens to be the headquarters of Fire Records, the independent label he rescued from oblivion in 2002, wafting its dying embers into a now healthy blaze. Including the five years around the turn of the millennium, when Fire all-but perished, the label has been around for 33 years – a birthday that makes it a shoo-in for a magazine devoted to vinyl. It's also an anniversary that few would've wagered a penny on Fire reaching when, in 1997, Clive Solomon extinguished its first iteration.

"The way I convinced Clive to set it up again was the concept of Fire coming back from nothing," says Nicholls, who has worshipped the label since he was at school (he's now approaching 40). "It's such a great story. Like, no one expects Fire to be at the top table of indie labels again, so let's ruffle a few feathers and get it back there as soon as we can." With the twisted wreckage of the label still smouldering back in 2002, it wasn't an easy idea to sell to Solomon.

Inspired by the golden era of independent labels signing bands in blood and releasing weird Marxist art pop that still landed in the upper region of the charts, Clive Solomon set up Fire with music journalist Johnny Waller in 1984 as a home for outlier artists. They signed a band from Sheffield called Pulp and took revered psych-pop shamblers Television Personalities and Bristol art-rockers Blue Aeroplanes under their wing.

The label hired 80s indie-scene gadabout Dave Barker as an A&R person and he brought in Spacemen 3 and Jad Fair's wigged-out garage band, Half Japanese. But it was a knife-edge existence all along. According to Richard King's book about independent labels, *How Soon Is Now?*, there was a sign in Fire's office promising: "Everything'll be alright when the Spacemen album comes out," referring to Jason Pierce and Sonic Boom's final LP, *Recurring*. To rely on a fractious band whose output was an Ouroboros loop of drug-fried synths and feedback-strafed space rock says everything you need to know about the often-rickety indie business.

The 1991 upending of Rough Trade Records, which Fire had signed a deal with, was a blow that the label only just survived. They limped on, branching out into US alt-rock and releasing music by The Gun Club, Neutral Milk Hotel and Built To Spill. But a crash loomed. Solomon was accused of acting in his own best interests rather than those of his artists; Barker moved to Creation; and his fellow A&R Laurence Bell flew the coop to set up Domino. The nail in

the coffin, though, was seeing former Fire bands move to new labels for their next (big) albums. After 1992's *Separations*, Pulp released their 1994 breakthrough album *His 'N' Hers* on Island. The rest is history.

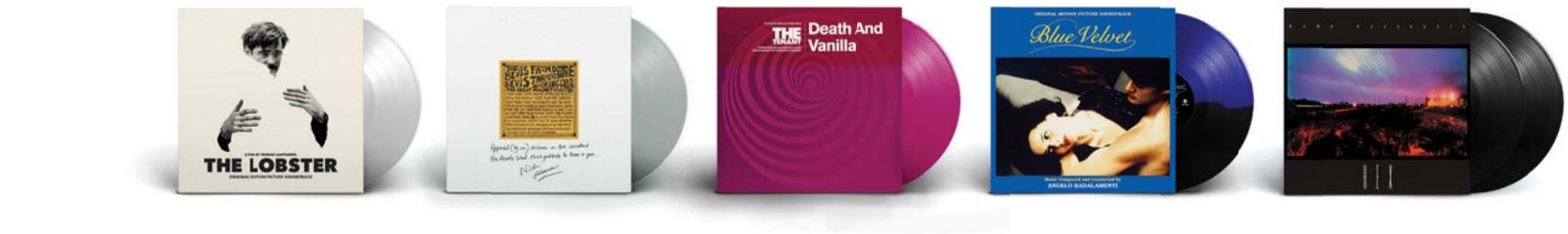
"Pulp leaving was hard," Nicholls says. "Of course it was. And there was a change in direction in which a few bands that – if Clive was honest, weren't to his taste – had a degree of success and he had to maintain that. We can be relatively successful now selling 10,000 copies of things. But trying to keep a band in the charts back then was incredibly expensive, and he was going into debt just to maintain a push on bands like Gigolo Aunts, Libido and Salamanda. It was post-Britpop meat-and-potatoes indie-rock."

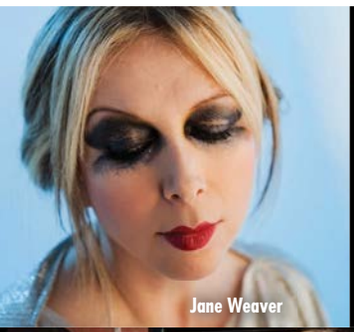
END OF THE BEGINNING

Solomon called time on the label in 1997. And that should be the end of the story. But up stepped Nicholls, who grew up obsessed by Creation and Factory and the madmen running independent record labels.

"I just thought it was the coolest thing to do. I'd pretend to release records. Put them in sleeves and design them and have them on my own terribly named labels. As soon as I was 16, I borrowed £500 and put out a record by a shit band and watched it sell, like, five copies." He wasn't put off by the odds-on likelihood of financial disaster and, in 2002, finally persuaded Solomon to let him rekindle Fire.

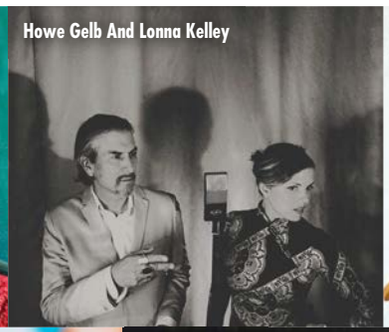
The first thing he did was to flee the money-draining capital to keep costs down. "We moved to Nottingham. I was still fairly young. We had this big house with lots of rooms, which we rented out to cover the costs of the label. But then I had my first child. So, by that time, I had a six-month-old baby, four housemates, and the label had just started to pay me and we needed staff. We really did it on a shoestring."




Jane Weaver

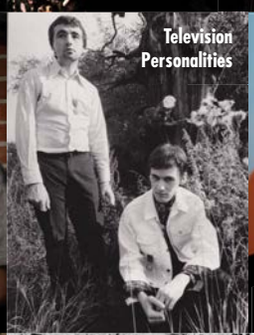
Bardo Pond

Pictish Trail


Howe Gelb And Lonna Kelley

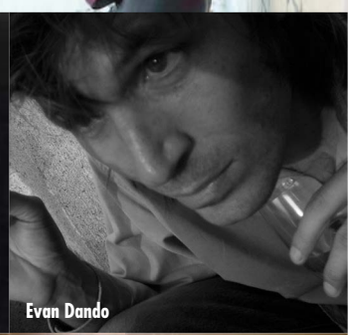
Noveller

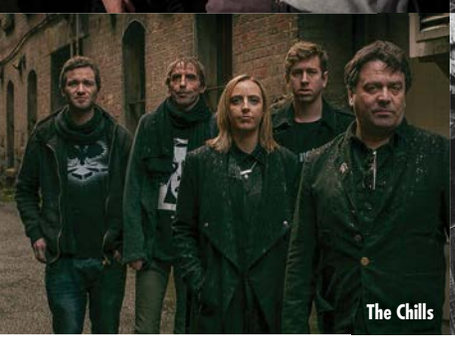
Hater


Television Personalities

Virginia Wing

The Bevis Frond


Evan Dando


The Chills

Modern Studies

Death And Vanilla

"Dedication's what you need," a wise man once sang. That, and a healthy back catalogue. Nicholls began by reissuing what Fire already owned, but only after nursing the broken relationships incurred during the label's first flush. "It's important for me to front the label and have Clive in the backseat, I think," says Nicholls. "We spent a disproportionate amount of time repairing relationships when we were trying to grow the label. It's like repairing things with former players when you're building a football team. It became farcical, but we did our best and then moved on from it."

Nicholls has since worked things out with Television Personalities, and this year Fire reissued their long out-of-print albums for the first time. They've also mended bridges with Pulp and barfly intellectual Pat Fish's The Jazz Butcher, while at the same time gathering other bands' music. Nicholls acquired The Lemonheads' entire catalogue from Warner recently and, in the early days of Fire's phoenix-like return, he convinced Americana mainstay Howe Gelb to allow Fire to reissue all 17 Giant Sand albums. "If it wasn't for that, we wouldn't be where we are now," Nicholls admits. "For the first five or six years, reissues were the majority of our income. It's flipped dramatically the other way now. They account for 10 per cent of our income. It's very much new Fire that's funding everything today."

PERE UBU
PERE UBU
PERE UBU

Fire Films adds movie soundtracks and documentary films to the roster

James Nicholls (standing) with the label's original co-founder, Clive Solomon

"WHEN A RECORD COMES BACK, WE'RE ALL ECSTATIC. IT'S LIKE AN OPENING CEREMONY"

Bardo Pond. With Modern Studies bringing their lush acid-folk redux to the label this year, alongside Swedish indie-pop band Hater and Pictish Trail, aka Lost Map Records boss Johnny Lynch, the label has released 50-odd projects in 2017. The vinyl-collecting masses demand it.

"The landscape has changed so much," Nicholls says. "There was a time when nothing would sell on pre-order and they'd go to record shops and do okay. But now everything sells – sometimes sells out – and then has a second life, a wider distribution. Putting out vinyl is what I set out to do. It's ridiculous sometimes, coming up with ideas for boxsets. And this is our job! When a record comes back, even if it's just a re-press in a different colour or a set we've spent two years on, we're all ecstatic. It's like an opening ceremony."

ETERNAL FLAME

The label's offices are a mess of ticker tape now that Fire has added folky reissue label Earth Recordings and Fire Films to its list of concerns. As well as releasing soundtracks, such as *A Scanner Darkly* and *Blue Velvet*, they've also entered the filmmaking market. Fire is currently involved with documentaries about New Zealand indie-pop band The Chills and iconic British folk singer Shirley Collins, though Nicholls missed out on Collins' first new album in 38 years, *Lodestar*. "Shirley and I had even celebrated over a bottle of whiskey at her house. But we were so invested in her that when it came to doing *The Ballad Of Shirley Collins*, we thought, 'We've got to do this.'"

Nicholls still runs the label from home, micro-managing the chaotic overlap between family life and work, but that home is now back in London, and he's had to build an extension to accommodate the 10 people who work at Fire Records. It's a miraculous turnaround. But despite the myriad changes, the original Fire spirit is still aflame. "It was always about maverick, outsider artists, the outliers, the most interesting aspects of alternative music. That theme still runs through what we do. And because we're so hands-on with the artists, we come up with ridiculous ideas. Moments of genius and terrible decisions. That spirit has always been there." Fire Records is still spinning, even after 33 revolutions around the sun… It might even make it to 45. ●

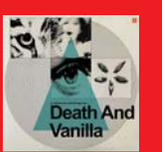
James Nicholls, with vinyl collection and assistant

Evan Dando is signed to Fire, and the label recently acquired The Lemonheads' back catalogue from Warner

FIVE ESSENTIAL FIRE RECORDS RELEASES

Jane Weaver *Modern Kosmology*
"Our current bestseller, and a breakthrough for Jane. Her career seems to be on a never-ending upward arc. A psych-prog masterpiece."

Death And Vanilla *To Where The Wild Things Are*



"We had to do this record and I wouldn't take no for an answer. Both records represent where we are as a label."

Bark Psychosis *Codename: Dustsucker*
"This was one of the first records we put out on the relaunched label, and the fact it's now up for reissue is an important and strangely emotional landmark in my time at the label. It still sounds as fresh as it did then."

Spacemen 3 *The Perfect Prescription*

"A bona-fide classic that will never be bettered."

The Chills *Silver Bullets*
"They basically came back from the dead for this, and it's a beautiful thing of huge choruses and heavy emotion."

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RYAN ADAMS

GOLD

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Ryan Adams' sophomore breakthrough from 2001 remains a masterwork – and this limited-editon vinyl release contains four bonus tracks

WAX FACTS
Ryan Adams
Gold
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Format **Red-and-blue coloured vinyl**
£295

Ryan Adams has had a career of ups and downs, both personally and professionally. Each of his records has been filled with struggle, heartache and hope – and his 2001 album, *Gold*, is one of the highlights of his career. It has some of Adams' most up-tempo tracks, such as *Firecracker*, *Gonna Make You Love Me*, and *New York, New York* – along with the sombre *When The Stars Go Blue* and the hauntingly beautiful *La Cienega Just Smiled*.

This particular issue was a promotional-only release in the US, limited to just 1,000 numbered copies. It is pressed on red-and-blue coloured vinyl to match Old Glory, which adorns the sleeve. This version is very rarely seen, as anyone who has a copy struggles to let it go, and rightfully so. But if you do see one on the market, a mint-condition copy will cost you up to £300.

The added bonus of the vinyl copy is that you get four extra tracks that were unavailable at the time, having been left off the commercial CD release. Adams' original intent was for *Gold* to be a double album, but his label, Lost Highway, had other ideas. The four tracks, including the excellent *Rosalie Come And Go* and *Cannonball Days*, were included only with initial CD pressings.

Ultimately, *Gold* turned Ryan Adams into the star he is today. His sound may have taken many twists and turns since, tackling heavy metal under the name Orion and releasing his own version of the Taylor Swift album, *1989*, but *Gold* remains a touchstone of modern Americana. ***Glen Bushell***

COVER STAR

COMIC GENIUS DAVE MCKEAN

His unique drawing skills saw Dave McKean become a renowned artist with DC Comics. As he tells **Dave Dickson**, it led to a career in album artwork, producing covers for artists as diverse as Tori Amos, John Cale and Alice Cooper

There are those who seriously believe that creationism offers a better explanation of life on Earth than Darwin's theory of evolution. There are also some who contend that Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* is not the greatest movie ever made. That, at least, is an arguable position. And then there are some who cannot bring themselves to admit that the comic book is a legitimate artform. If this were a court of law, then the primary witness for the defence in countering this absurd proposition would be Dave McKean.

McKean burst onto the comic-book scene in 1987 with the publication of *Violent Cases*, a graphic novel he illustrated in collaboration with the then-unknown writer, Neil Gaiman. Their partnership has continued to this day, but back then, they had both, independently, approached editor Paul Gravett, who was attempting to launch a new project. At his suggestion, the two combined their talents and, though Gravett's project failed, theirs, after many trials and tribulations, saw the light of day. But even before a single page had been printed, the two had found themselves being auditioned for work by DC Comics publisher Jenette Kahn, editor Karen Berger and artist Dick Giordano. They had come to the UK Comic Convention to talent-scout in the wake of the success of fellow Britons such as Alan Moore and Brian Bolland. "*Violent Cases* hadn't come out yet when we went to see the editors at DC," says McKean. "So I just showed [Dick] all the pages and he was a real fan of illustration. We were very lucky, you couldn't get better timing. The door was open but very few people knew about it."

That meeting in London led to *The Sandman*, a series of comic books and graphic novels written by Gaiman, with covers by McKean. And that, in turn, led to another creative outlet for the artist: album covers. To date, McKean has produced more than 100 designs for a wide variety of different musicians and genres.

If we press the rewind button on McKean's career as an artist and instead view it through the prism of music, we discover a longstanding devotion to the cause. The artist is, by all accounts, no mean keyboardist and composer, but when he was in his teens and gaining entry to Berkshire College Of Art And Design, the overriding musical form was punk. Its effect on the budding artist, however, didn't quite fit in with that of his peers. Rather, it was: "Not [so much] the music, but the attitude and everything around it – the idea that you should just do it, you don't need to ask anybody's permission. You want to start a band or make a film or make a comic – just get on and do it. That's what punk did for my generation. I didn't like the music, but it knocked down the hierarchy. Before then, everything felt like an impossible mountain to climb."

So, while the music may not have inspired McKean, the philosophy did. Indeed, the desire to strike out on his own and hang the consequences has largely dictated McKean's career to date. That, and an almost uncanny ability to be in the right place at the right time. This trend made itself clear as he was approaching the end of his time at college: "One of the external assessors who came to judge our [the students'] work was doing an album cover for Isao Tomita." The assessor, apparently, needed a picture of a dove and McKean duly obliged.

In other words, he first dipped his toe into the water of music-business graphic design because the person who had been sent to grade him recognised his talent and decided to make use of it, even if on only a very limited scale.

BLAZING A TRAIL

Much higher profile was McKean's first professional album-cover artwork, for the Bradford death-metal band, My Dying Bride. The album was called *As The Flower Withers* and released in 1992. This commission came about, so McKean believes, as a direct result of his work for DC Comics, most especially the covers he had painted for *Hellblazer*, written and drawn by two other members of the second wave of the 'British Invasion', Jamie Delano and John Ridgway.

Once the ball had started rolling – and as McKean's notoriety grew – commissions for album-cover art began to appear more regularly. "From the bands or the labels. So sometimes, it's via the label – they've seen the books or the [comic book] covers somewhere, and they've enquired. Or it's directly via the band… and if it's the band, it's usually one member who is interested in the presentation and the covers. And that member has convinced the others, the one who's more enthusiastic about the visual side of the band."

The point of employing an artist such as McKean is that he does more than simply producing attractive images. There's an all-encompassing design project that comes with his work. "Only once or twice have I only done the cover," he says. "I always insist on doing the whole design. That's not really because I think I'm the greatest designer in the world, but because I've done a couple of album covers – and especially a couple of book covers – that were really ripped to

pieces by terrible art editors. And that was too painful. So, if at all possible, I design everything from the label to the front and back covers. I like that – having a single voice, or world or atmosphere, going through the whole thing."

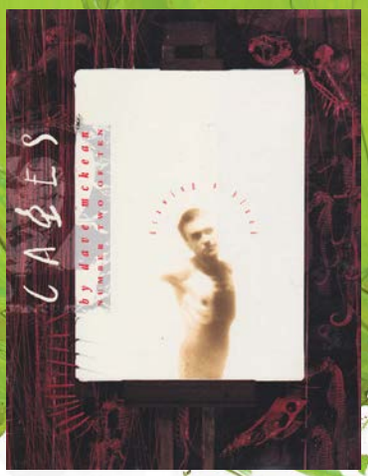
How loud that single voice is varies from project to project, as McKean explains: "The covers I've done for Bill Bruford – of which there have been lots – he basically just says, 'Here's the [album] title, just go away and bring it to me when it's done'. And he hasn't changed anything, as far as I can remember. There have been one or two that he's preferred, and the second one I did really was his favourite [*Heavenly Bodies*]. I think it remains his favourite. He kept on saying, 'I really like that second one'.

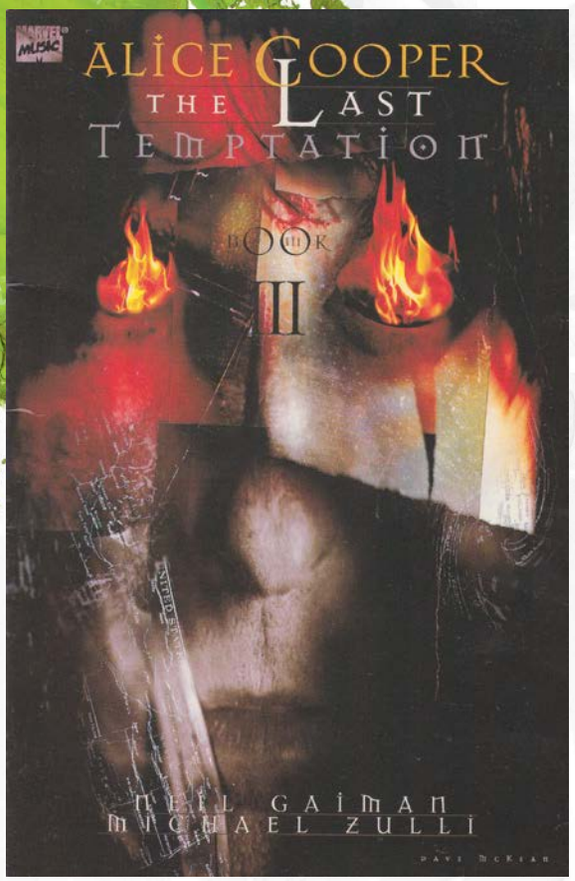
"But then other bands are very hands-on. They have images they want to send me, stories about the album they want to share… all sorts of briefs, but that's fine. I can sort through what will work for me and they've given me some options."

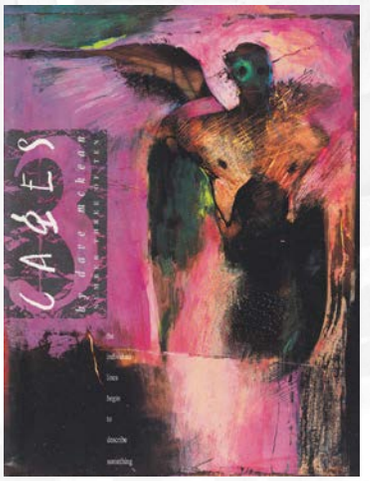
While the initial album artwork may have been spawned from the gothic nature of McKean's comic-book covers, both his own work and the bands and solo acts he has been commissioned to illustrate have varied greatly. The point being that, when you opt for a Dave McKean cover, the choice is both safe and at the same time risky – safe because it will be an iconic piece of artwork, but risky because: "I've used lots of different styles for lots of different projects over the years. I draw things, paint them, use photography, digital, ▶

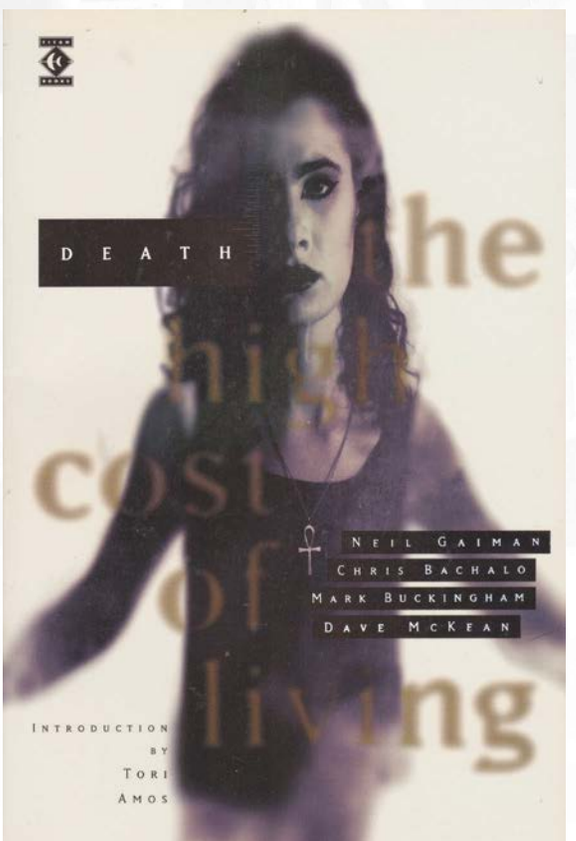
"THAT'S WHAT PUNK DID FOR MY GENERATION. I DIDN'T LIKE THE MUSIC, BUT IT KNOCKED DOWN THE HIERARCHY"

DAVE MCKEAN









realistic, cartoony and everything in-between. So it's a bit of a punt. It's not like getting HR Giger to do a cover. There, you pretty much know you're going to get a steely grey, dark, grungy penetrating object. Ha! Whereas you're not completely sure what I'm going to do.

"But in the end, it is their project, their name's on the front cover." Perhaps in order to redress this balance, or perhaps simply to satisfy those in the art-loving world who don't happen to be fans of these particular musicians, McKean is considering publishing a book of his album-cover designs. Given the 100-plus pieces of artwork he has produced so far, it could prove a voluminous text. Elsewhere, there are more books of photography in the offing and the possibility of a collaboration with Chinese artist and political activist, Ai Weiwei.

DREAM OF THE ENDLESS

For McKean, there's always another project to be working on and, of course, another album cover in the works. He is painfully self-effacing about his craft, whether it be painting, drawing, collage, photography or filmmaking – a subject not touched on here. Nor is the record label he set up with saxophonist Iain Ballamy – Feral – in order to release "avant-garde Norwegian jazz".

There remain a handful of artists whose albums McKean has not yet illustrated. "I'd love to do a cover for Björk," he says. "I'd love to do a cover for Peter Gabriel… and Paul Simon."

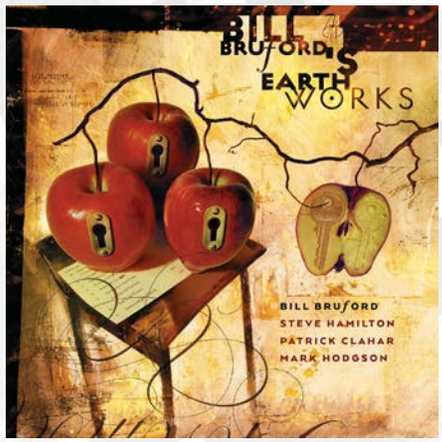
And all this from a comic book all those years ago…

> "IF POSSIBLE, I DESIGN EVERYTHING FROM THE LABELS TO THE COVERS"
>
> **DAVE MCKEAN**

DAVE MCKEAN

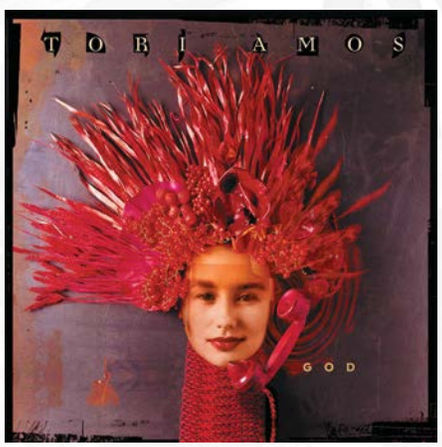
MICHAEL NYMAN
THE PIANO
1993

Nyman was established as a celebrated classical composer for movies when he wrote the score for Jane Campion's Oscar-winning film. McKean took a bold, new approach: "This was the first computer job I ever did. I'd bought an Apple Mac Quadro and read the manual from cover to cover, thinking: 'They've written this for me! These are all the things that I want to do and it all makes total sense… They know exactly what I want'. I hadn't seen the movie at this point. They sent me some stills and the trailer, but that was all I could see."



BILL BRUFORD'S EARTHWORKS
A PART, AND YET APART
1999

Bruford was a member of such progressive rock acts as Yes, Genesis and King Crimson. Earthworks was born out of his solo efforts and fascination with jazz. "We talked this through on the phone and because I was doing the whole package – the ads, the posters, everything – he could just hand all that off to me and trusted me to do it." Of all the Bruford covers McKean has conjured up, this is his favourite.



TORI AMOS
GOD
1994

Tori Amos has always been renowned for her confessional style. This cover, like the Nyman one, was an early Photoshop work. "Tori Amos was a fan of Neil Gaiman, so there was a connection right there. I got a call out of the blue from the woman doing all her photography. But Tori just fancied me doing one of her covers because she liked my work on *The Sandman* comic. So I got sent the tape and really liked the song."

DREAM THEATER
METROPOLIS PT. 2:
SCENES FROM A MEMORY
1999

"For one *Sandman* cover, I'd made a face out of other faces," McKean recalls. "Dream Theater really liked that picture and wanted the same image, but using moments from a story they had flowing through this album. So that was much more specific. They had a tale to tell and they sent me all the music and lyrics. Plus, they had a logo they wanted to use, so it was a much more established act with a very specific job. Different but fun. In fact, I think it was better than the original image."

CLASSIC COVERS

DAVE MCKEAN

ALICE COOPER
THE LAST TEMPTATION
1994

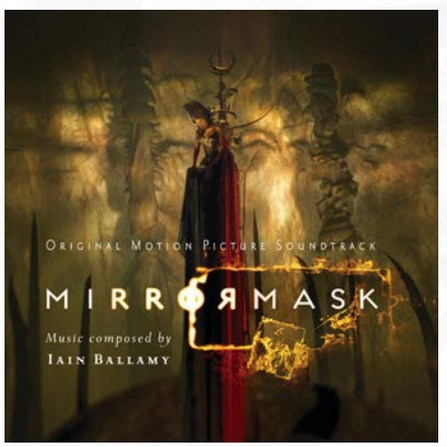
Rock legend Alice Cooper is also a comic-book fan. "This was a Marvel comic that Neil [Gaiman] wrote with Alice," says McKean. "It was written and created to be an album and a comic, and probably a stage show at the same time. But the album cover was taken directly from a phone conversation with Alice at about 2am. He said: 'Chinese theatre posters! They're great. That's what we should have on the cover'. And they are really strong. So that's why it has a bunch of little vignettes working together with a central image."

JOHN CALE
CIRCUS LIVE
2007

"It started with John Cale's autobiography," remembers McKean. "He wanted to do some stories as a comic, but he also wanted to do a version where the pages were loose-leaf and could be shuffled into endless John Cale lives. The whole thing sounded fantastically bonkers. Then this album came along. For the first time, he was performing Velvet Underground tracks. As a 12"-gatefold it would be a way of representing all these songs and eras. So that's where this came from and he completely bought that idea."

FRONT LINE ASSEMBLY
EPITAPH
2001

FLA are one of the foremost electro-industrial acts in the world. "I got a call from [frontman] Bill Leeb," McKean remembers. "They had a really good cover designer [Dave Coppenhall] but, for some reason, he couldn't do the new one, so Bill was trying to find someone to fill his boots. The first album I did was called *Millennium,* and I just carried on from there. And as the character of the band has changed over the years, I've tried to reflect that in the covers – a strange, grungy, cyber world. And this one seemed to work really well."



IAIN BALLAMY
MIRRORMASK
2005

Iain Ballamy was a member of Bill Bruford's Earthworks and a notable jazz saxophonist and composer. *MirrorMask* was a movie conceived, designed and directed by McKean with a screenplay by long-time colleague Neil Gaiman. To score the film, he turned to another long-standing friend and collaborator, Ballamy. "He wrote the music for *MirrorMask* with his producer, Ashley Slater. So the album came out with my artwork on it. But this, to a degree, was my most personal album." ●

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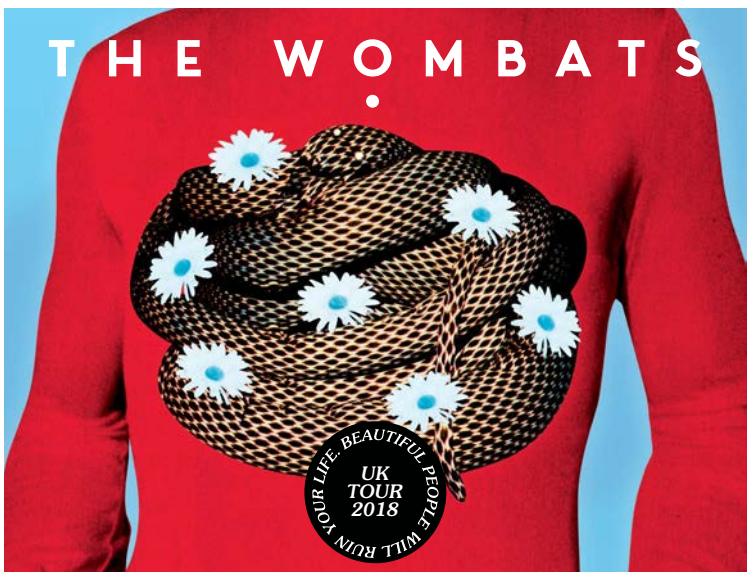

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RIVER MAN

THE RECORD DECK

The Record Deck is the UK's only floating record shop. **Chris Parkin** pulls up alongside proprietor and skipper Luke Gifford to find out who his customers are, and what floats his musical boat…

The Record Deck isn't the easiest shop to find. "I know, I keep moving it," smiles its owner, Luke Gifford. It is, however, an idyllic place to dig for old records. It's a glorious late October weekend when we finally track down his barge – the only floating record shop in the UK – in Springfield Park, Hackney. No one is in any hurry, including Gifford, who must be retail's easiest-going proprietor. He DJs and chats to customers under a clear blue sky and his carefree Instagram feed is all willow trees, canal-side hammocks and, of course, vinyl treasures. His is a bucolic life lifted from the pages of William Morris's *News From Nowhere* or a Jerome K. Jerome story.

Gifford pootles around the southern half of England at a pace so far removed from 21st-century living that he makes no bones at all about a forthcoming trip to a floating market in Berkhamsted that will take six days. That's a 12-day round trip from his winter moorings along the River Lea between Angel and Tottenham… Fast culture, this really ain't. So why did Gifford decide to sail against the wind of conventional landlubber retailing?

GET ONBOARD

Worn down by the grind of a college librarian job, Gifford weighed his options. After totting up the figures, and scared off by the skyrocketing cost of London rents, he hit the waterways full time in 2014. "I was just trying to get out of the nine-to-five," says the 42-year-old. "I never really got on with that, so this is just a way of trying to make a living in a freer way. I've always been into boats; I've had it for 18 years now. I guess, thinking about it, my only assets were that and a load of records."

Barge-based record shops aren't heavily touted at careers fairs, but once Gifford had conquered his fear of the unknown, he loaded his collection onto his boat and upped anchor.

The Record Deck now carries eight crates of priced-up LPs, four boxes of singles, and a few CDs and books. Gifford adds to these from two big baskets, which he works through during his many hours of solitude. We find an impressive and competitively priced mix of progressive rock, acid-folk, jazz and stellar dub originals by The Scientist and others, all in excellent condition. There are Pink Floyd, King Crimson, Pentangle and Captain Beefheart LPs alongside year-zero punk, oddities such as Ravi Shankar's underrated *Shankar Family & Friends* LP, and the best 90s indie rock.

Gifford started collecting when he was 12, taking that well-worn route from his parents' Beatles albums to heavy metal and beyond, via Talking Heads and Neil Young. "The shop is definitely curated a bit to what I'm into and what I know, and it depends on where I go," Gifford explains. "I go to the Cropredy Festival near Banbury every year, so I gear up my stock for that: folky, proggy, Fairport-y, that sort of world." The wax he restocks with is also dependent on

> "WHERE YOU HANG OUT COLOURS THE STOCK, ESPECIALLY FOR ME, BECAUSE I GET MOST OF MY STOCK FROM THE PEOPLE I MEET. PEOPLE WHO ARE RETIRING… OR MOVING ONTO A BOAT, EVEN. IT'S VERY RANDOM"
>
> **LUKE GIFFORD**

> IN THE 1800S, THERE WERE LOTS OF SONGS WRITTEN ABOUT THE CANALS BY THE PEOPLE WHO BUILT THEM. MY TOP TRACK IS SOMETHING FROM THE 70S ABOUT A BOAT CALLED THE TILBURY THAT BLEW UP IN A TUNNEL IN LONDON. IT'S AMAZING
>
> **LUKE GIFFORD**

where he's moored up. Just like The Record Deck's day-to-day existence, the quality of Gifford's onboard selection is guided by fortune. "Where you hang out colours the stock, especially for me, because I get most of my stock from the people I meet," he says. "People who are retiring… or moving onto a boat, even. It's very random. I have a sign out and someone will be walking their dog and see it. But people like the idea of their records being redistributed around the country on a boat. They even mention that; they'll come to me because they want their records to end up in other places. I picked up two small collections this week. One had lots of Incredible String Band and other odd things. The other one was hip-hop."

The Record Deck stocks a bit of everything, from 50p singles to pricey rarities. Gifford aims to appeal as much to Mr Dog Walker as he does the seasoned collectors who seek him out. "The best customers, though, are the ones who've randomly stumbled upon it and find something they were looking for; a record they've been after for years." He has his regulars, though, and his inner metal fan is still singing hosannas after he sold some records to a member of Whitesnake. "My big customers this year have been Scandinavian record-shop owners," he adds. "The pound is so low that they can restock here and take it back and still make their mark-up."

The Record Deck has another niche audience. More and more barge owners have turntables on their boats, Gifford explains, and he likes to target them with a sub-genre as obscure as witch house and pirate metal: canal folksong. "I always make sure I've got some of those in," laughs Gifford. "They're interesting to boaters. In the 1800s, there were lots of songs written about the canals by the people who built them. My top track is something from the 70s about a boat called the Tilbury that blew up in a tunnel in London. It's amazing."

The Record Deck hasn't gone up in flames just yet, but calamity is always just around the corner. Records sometimes end up in the canal. "They don't float," Gifford says, "so there's a first-press *Ziggy*… at the bottom of Regent's Canal." And the more time he spends treading slippery gunnels, the more often he falls into the murky water below. But he's not the only one who's ended up in the soup. Shoppers, beware: "Some guys on the Kennet and Avon were in a rowing boat and very excitedly bought some records… then capsized five minutes later. It was like Poseidon took a sacrifice."

BRIAN STORM

Gifford is sanguine about taking a dunk, but he's less enamoured with bad weather. Even as we're checking out a copy of *Ronnie Lane's Slim Chance* under a blazing autumn sun, Storm Brian is bearing down on the UK and is forecast to rain on The Record Deck's parade the following weekend. Not ideal conditions for displaying crates of records on a towpath. "If the weather's bad for a few weeks, then you're going to do badly," Gifford sighs. "You can travel all week to a festival or a floating market and it might be raining all weekend, so everyone gets a bit down in the dumps about that." Why

CANAL COUNTDOWN

Five canal folksong classics, popular among the barge-owning community

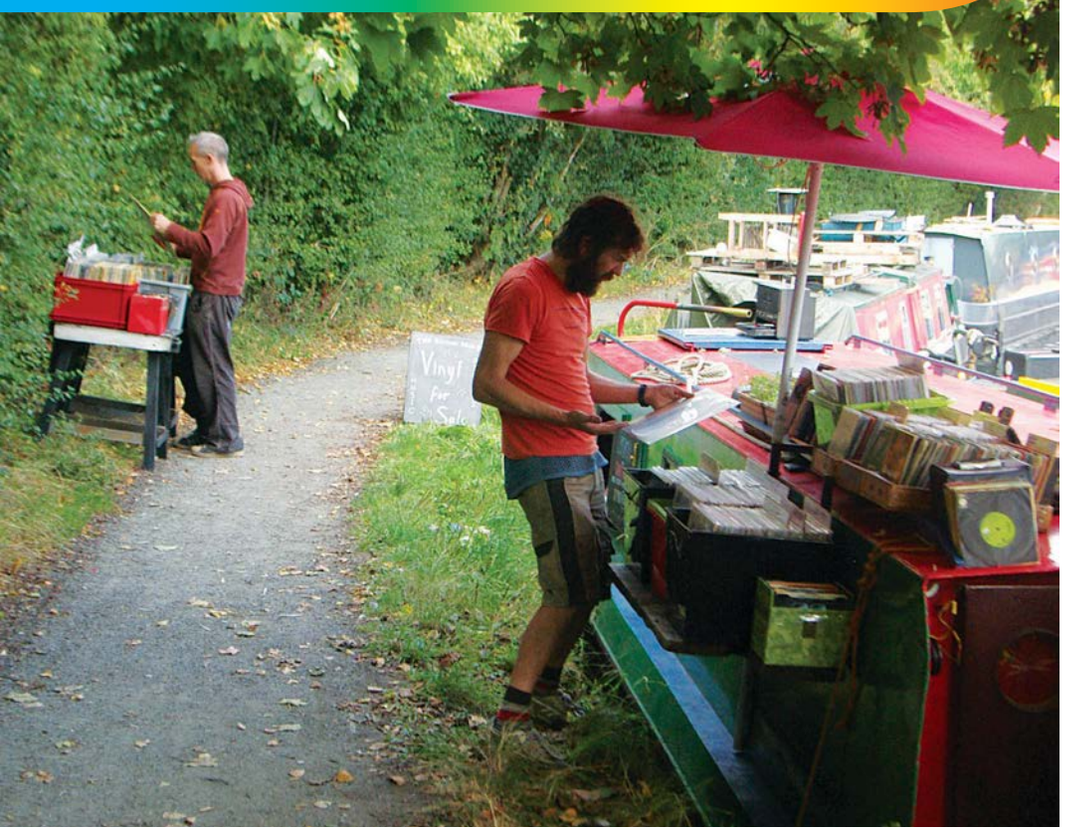
TILBURY
MIKRON THEATRE COMPANY

THE TOMMY NOTE
JON RAVEN ET AL

POOR OLD HORSE
THE ALBION BAND

THE ERIE CANAL
PETE SEEGER

THE SINGLE BOLINDER
THE BOATMEN



can't shoppers just climb aboard during inclement weather?

"My licence is to trade off the boat, you see. You can get a licence to have people on board, but it's tricky – you need extra safety certificates, extra insurance. The licence I have is called a Roving Trader, which is a nice name. It means you can sell through hatches or shelves attached to your boat. I do have umbrellas and I sometimes do a mini setup with the side-hatch open."

During spring and summer, The Record Deck winds its way around the country's waterways to the growing number of canal festivals and floating markets supported by the Canal & River Trust and Roving Canal Traders Association. Gifford has piloted The Record Deck as far as Stratford-upon-Avon, Birmingham and Leicester. He's also undertaken the three-week journey to Bath. "I love the canal," he says. "The Kennet and Avon is my favourite. As soon as you hit Pewsey, there's a lot of history around you. White Horses, Avebury… It has a good feel about it."

The floating markets aren't just about commerce – if they were, barge owners would return to land and get a market stall somewhere. They're also social 'happenings' for the boating masses. The Record Deck has organised 'onstore' performances from This Is The Kit and Darren Hayman, and Gifford puts on acoustic nights for the community of barge owners he's part of. Even if the winter brings apocalyptically bad weather and annihilates all his passing trade, Gifford is going nowhere – very slowly. "You can choose one or the other, really: money or freedom," he says. "It's hard to have them both." ●

iStock

The Trip

Vienna

Globetrotting record collector Mark Elliott goes baroque 'n' roll on this deep dig through the crates of Austria's timelessly beautiful City Of Music

For pop collectors like me, this region of Europe always gets the heart beating a bit faster. Those glorious 7" picture sleeves that supported decades of hit songs while the US and UK markets were still settling for generic label sleeves; variant labels and multiple oddities that continue to surprise me and, for someone with a passion for all things 1980s, the lure of continental classics from ubiquitous hit-makers of the time, such as Michael Cretu and Dieter Bohlen.

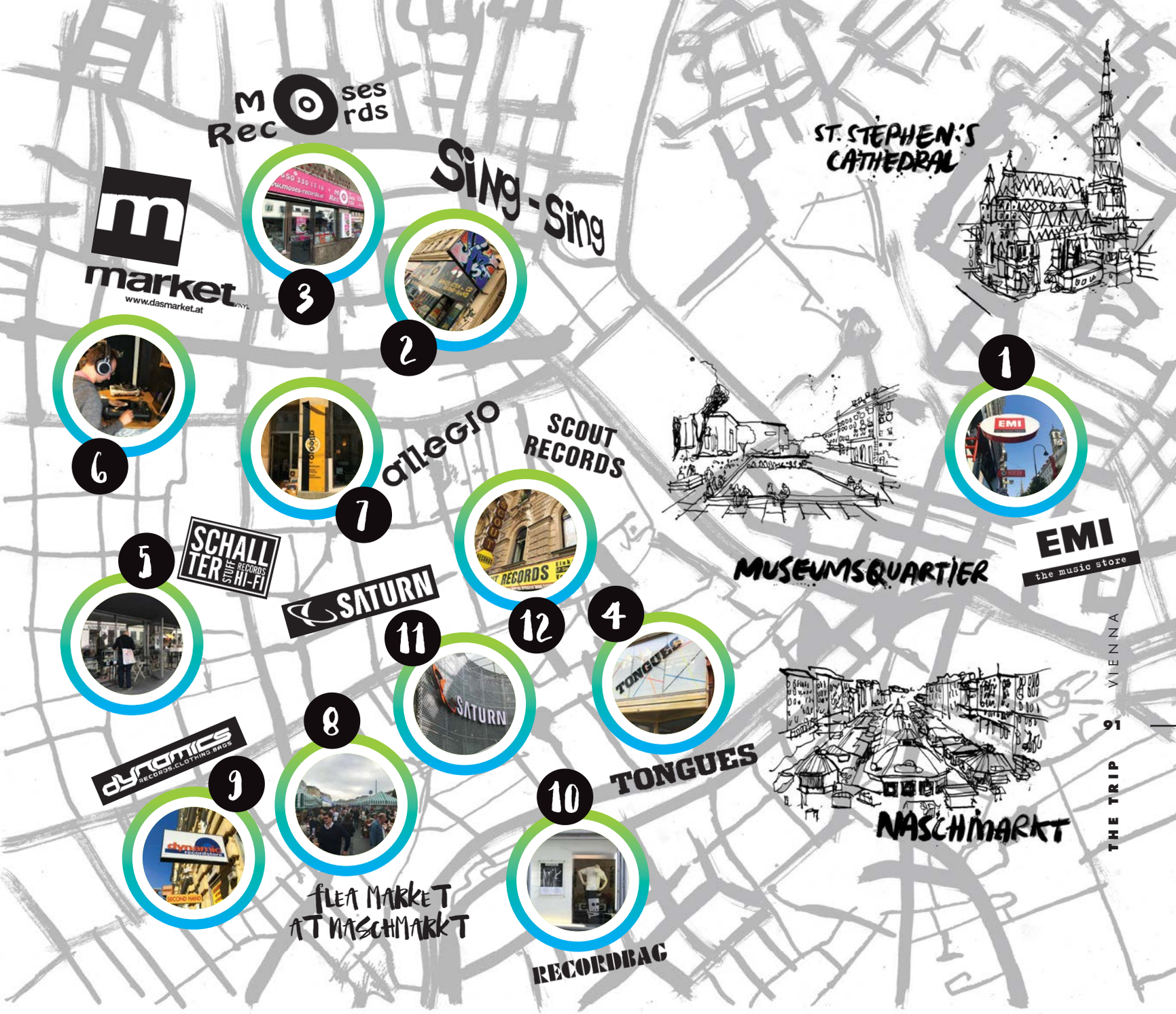
Vienna is an easy city to navigate, with most of the attractions close to each other. However, I made the mistake of getting one of those hop-on, hop-off tourist buses and realised quite quickly it was taking me round the inner ring road, with everything I needed to see located in the city centre that I was circling merrily like a lemon for the best part of an hour. Still, in truth, sightseeing was – as ever – secondary in my thoughts, as I knew there were some decent shops here that needed my attention.

A word of warning: timing is everything in this part of the world. Sundays here will transport you back to the ghost-town high streets of your youth. Don't expect anything much to be open here then – let alone one of these shops – but Saturday's fleamarket is a must, so work your itinerary around that. Credit cards aren't widely accepted in Austria outside of the big stores and hotels (many restaurants don't even take them), so make sure you've stocked up on Euros.

Prices here were very favourable, with many of my prized picture-sleeve singles going for little over a Euro. Decent albums from all genres cost roughly the same as you might find in other European cities (I increasingly feel pricing is becoming uniform across territories). As in neighbouring Germany, I found the condition of the discs to be good and the management of the stock efficient, so diving through the racks was speedy and effective. Germany and Austria are big markets for music and there's a lot of vinyl to sift through, so a couple of days here in Vienna will see you break the back of it (particularly if you're interested in singles – there are thousands of them for sale, at very good prices). Most of the city's record shops are about 20 minutes' walk from the city centre, situated around the Neubau district. With more time, I would have included Rave Up, Teuchtler Schallplattenhandlung and Record Shack, but this is what I found on my recent visit…

Vienna is an easy city to navigate, with most of the attractions close to each other

Illustration Ben Talon



❶ EMI AUSTRIA

30 Kärntner Street, 1010
emistore.at
Opening hours
10am to 7pm Monday to Friday; 10am to 6pm Saturday

❷ SING SING

19 Neustiftgasse, 1070
schallplatten-ankauf.at
Opening hours
10am to 6.30pm Monday to Friday; 10am to 5pm Saturday

❸ MOSES RECORDS

33 Lerchenfelder Street, 1070
moses-records.at
Opening hours
12 pm to 8pm Monday to Friday; 12pm to 7pm Saturday

❹ TONGUES

27/III Kirchengasse, 1070
tongues.at
Opening hours
2pm to 9pm Monday to Friday; 2pm to 6pm Saturday

❺ SCHALLTER AUDIO & RECORDS

13 Westbahnstrasse, 1070
schallter.at
Opening hours
10am to 7pm Monday to Friday; 10am to 5pm Saturday

❻ DAS MARKET

40 Zieglergasse, 1070
Opening hours
3pm to 8pm Tuesday; 1pm to 8pm Wednesday and Thursday; 12pm to 8pm Friday; 12pm to 6pm Saturday

❼ ALLEGRO

32-34 Siebensterngasse, 1070
allegro-hifi.at
Opening hours
2pm to 7pm Monday to Friday; 10am to 1pm Saturday

❽ FLEA MARKET AT NASCHMARKT

Between Karlsplatz and Kettenbrückengasse
naschmarkt-vienna.com
Opening hours
Varies, but get here before 10am!

❾ DYNAMIC

32 Esterhazygasse, 1060
dynamicrecords.at
Opening hours
11am to 7pm Monday to Friday; 11am to 6pm Saturday

❿ RECORDBAG

4 Kollergerngasse, 1060
recordbag.at
Opening hours
10am to 7pm Monday to Friday; 10am to 6pm Saturday

⓫ SATURN

42-48 Mariahilfer Street, 1070
Opening hours
9.30am to 8pm Monday to Wednesday; 9.30am to 8pm Thursday and Friday; 9.30am to 6pm Saturday

⓬ SCOUT RECORDS

3 Capistrangasse, 1060
Opening hours
2pm to 7pm Monday to Friday; 10am to 5pm Saturday

This bodes well: a slick CD and record retailer still trading in the centre of a shopping district, with a strong vinyl section

1 EMI AUSTRIA

Now this bodes well: a slick CD and record retailer still trading in the centre of a shopping district. Given its marketing pitch to general tourists, the CDs still act as the magnet on the ground floor, but the first-floor vinyl section is surprisingly strong, with new stock. Prices are perhaps slightly on the higher side, but I guess city-centre rents don't pay themselves and this is, in truth, the only major music retailer in the heart of Vienna, so I can forgive that. The releases are bang up to date and there's a satisfying range of vinyl boxsets and special editions. One thing that catches my eye is a German-issued soundtrack to *Peggy Sue Hat Geheiratet*. Released on the Colosseum label in 1987, this John Barry score – with additional songs from Buddy Holly and Dion & The Belmonts – is in the sale section and appears to have sat there, still sealed, for 30 years. Well, I'm pleased to report it will now be rehomed in the UK and the entire resettlement has set me back less than €10. It's an auspicious start!

2 SING SING

As with all of the stores I visit, everything at Sing Sing is exceptionally well organised, with boxes of 45s segmenting tidy racks of all manner of genres. I'm interested to see what Schlager prices are like. This brand of European pop, of the type we all enjoy each Eurovision, is highly prized by some collectors and remains a big market in the central and northern regions of the continent. Although these 45s are slightly pricier than regular 70s and 80s pop and rock, there's a good range here. There are some interesting imports – the Fab Four's first Stateside album, *Introducing The Beatles*, on Vee-Jay – is a reasonable price, and closer to home, the Austrian pop hero Falco is also well represented. Austrian and German pop is a defined genre in all of the stores I visit; it's a bewildering labyrinth of artists. Instead, I grab some prize 45s in variant picture sleeves, including something I hadn't heard of: The Lunatix's *There's A Ghost In My House*, which proves to be spiky new wave… widely available from Discogs, but not at this price! A collection for *Der Formal Eins* (the West German state's *Top Of The Pops*) catches my eye – not least for the inclusion of Limahl's German-only 45 *Tar Beach*.

3 MOSES RECORDS

For a 45 collector, this is the Promised Land. In just over an hour here, I'm only able to get through about a third of the racks of singles, all nicely cleaned and housed in smart PVC sleeves. At a single Euro each, with a small box on the counter for a stack of higher-priced items, this would likely blast a hole in my Wants List very easily if I had the time to go through it all properly. There is some new vinyl for sale here, but it's the used catalogue that makes this exciting. The box on the counter yields a couple of Frida-from-ABBA 45s I need – *To Turn The Stone* from 1982 and the following year's *Here We'll Stay*. When Chicago's Peter Cetera decided to work with the Bucks Fizz songwriter Andy Hill in the early 1990s, radio had abandoned their brand of melodic pop and the album tanked. *Man In Me* was extracted as a single and I'm thrilled to finally get my hands on this 1992 7" – it was something that two previous trips to neighbouring Germany had failed to throw up. The vinyl now completely dominates this long-standing and respected retailer and I'm only sorry to miss the upcoming tour of the store's Vinyl And CD Bus. This psychedelic-inspired campervan brings its magic to the regular record fairs that take place in the city and its distinctive branding has made it something of an iconic sight for the city's crate diggers. The feedback I got was that Moses is typical of the city's long-standing retailers, who continue to see steady interest in vinyl and this, coupled with Vienna's strong tourist economy showing no sign of slowing, means the outlook looks bright. I could go on about the 70s picture sleeves I source, but I appreciate my enthusiasm for Gloria Gaynor, Pilot and Peter Schilling probably isn't matched by yours. My haul here totals nearly three figures…

4 TONGUES

Electronic specialist Tongues has a great reputation in this city and, although there's a bit of synth and some broader dance here, it's certainly aimed at the specialist. This great space is the sort of place for hanging out and being seen in as much as it is for picking up a new white label. I'm not surprised to see a number of clearly overseas visitors to the city in Tongues, as Vienna's developing a strong reputation for its club scene. With alcohol prices steep, it's unlikely to slide into the dubious 'stag do' market some cities in this region of Europe are known for, which will keep the clubbers cool and shops like this in business. Prices here are good (perhaps consistent for this type of vinyl across the continent).

Tongues is a great space, that's for hanging out and being seen in as much as it is for picking up a new white label

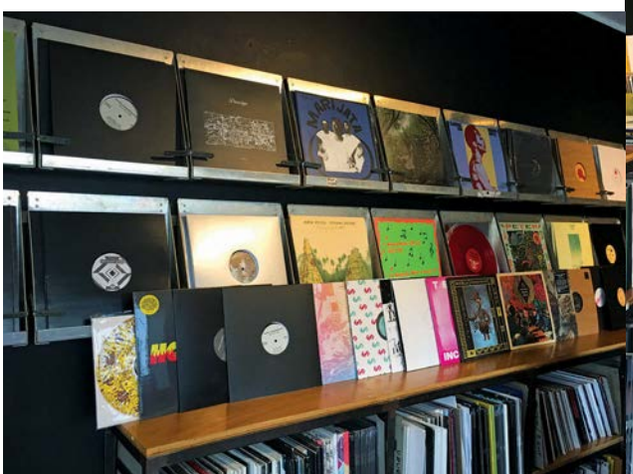
5 SCHALLTER AUDIO & RECORDS

This is Vienna's newest record store. Sharing its space with a haul of well-curated hi-fi equipment, this clean and airy 18-month-old doubles up for the odd gig (notably at this year's Record Store Day) and I find a nice mix of material, including that inevitable German cliché – the David Hasselhoff album. Not one either, but two: 1990's big hit *Crazy For You* and 1991's *David*. Now, everyone would be disappointed if these hadn't found their way into my collection, and I duly oblige. At €6 apiece and in near-mint condition (I'm ignoring the perhaps obvious gag that a previous owner likely couldn't bear to play them), I can report that the melodic Jack White-produced fare isn't a million miles away from marginally more collectable artists such as Cliff Richard. Mark my words: these will appreciate in value someday! I think that Schallter's owner was surprised when I made my purchase. He had directed me at first to the Led Zeppelin and wider rock section, so I'm guessing he hasn't come across this feature before.

I find a nice mix of material, including that inevitable German cliché: the David Hasselhoff album. Not one either, but two

6 DAS MARKET

Round the corner from Schallter's, this 2008-established competitor to Tongues probably wins the social-media war, judging by later research, but I find it hard to tell which is stronger, in truth. Both seem to be serving up some beefy beats that are entirely appropriate for the clientele and both carry a similar amount of stock. There's definitely no Hasselhoff to be had here…



7 ALLEGRO

This small store is worth a quick mention and has a nice range of mainly used records. I'm pressed for time and can't do it justice, but everything is nicely presented and mood lighting does a decent job of making even the sale items – a lot of Chris Rea – look inviting. Yes, I know that jibe's a bit rich coming from a man who has just bought The Hoff (a third and final mention for him)…

8 FLEA MARKET AT NASCHMARKT

These can be hit-and-miss affairs back home, but Vienna's weekly flea market is definitely one to get out of bed for. The hardcore get here early (around 5 or 6am, I am told) but I manage a respectable 8am and I still find many of the vinyl stalls are already besieged. Again, as I've found throughout this trip, the vinyl is generally in good condition, although a few stalls do stock some scratched and damaged stock. I even find one disc neatly snapped in two, so exercise *some* caution here, at least. The prices are no less attractive than I found in the regular stores, but an excellent first pressing of Kraftwerk's *Die Mensch-Maschine* is mine for €20 and makes for an obvious memento from my trip. Less collectable fare is equally reasonable – Vanilla Ice's *To The Extreme* LP sets me back €3, while a distinctive picture sleeve of Lulu's *The Man With The Golden Gun* is just €10 and in excellent condition, too. Despite my worse-than-useless German, I'm able to haggle and I sense the traders are well used to being made a silly offer. I don't disappoint, but even I wonder if €5 for the mint soundtrack to *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II* is pushing it. Still, what price Cathy Dennis, Dan Hartman and David Morales? There are probably over 100 stalls to visit here and I'd estimate about 20% carry some vinyl, so to do this properly, you'll need a couple of hours at least.

Top five

1 ROCK ME, AMADEUS
The Austrian music scene peaked early with 18th and 19th Century draws Haydn, Beethoven, Strauss and, of course, Mozart making Vienna their base. Mozart's story inspired Austria's biggest international property of recent decades, Falco, who scored No. 1s worldwide with *Rock Me Amadeus* in 1986, but died just 12 years later.

2 MONEY, MONEY, MONEY
You'll need a stack of notes for the flea market (and you'll need to be prepared to haggle), but cash was also king in about half the shops I visited, too. A couple of stores would accept credit cards, but also offered a discount if I was prepared to use my currency instead.

3 LOOK SHARP!
Draconian weekend trading laws meant that, sadly, my second day of cratedigging was curtailed. Annoyingly, one of the two stores I missed out on was Teuchtler, used in the movie *Before Sunrise* for a scene where the chemistry between Jesse and Celine was starting to heat up. Make sure you don't make the mistake I made – head there first! It's open from 1pm to 6pm Monday to Friday and just three hours from 10am on a Saturday.

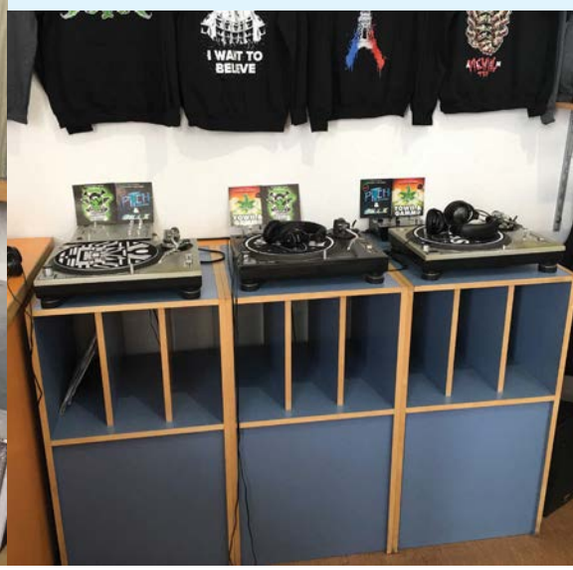
4 THRIFT SHOP
Neubau, where Moses is situated, has a number of charming junk shops. A handful I visited had a decent stash of vinyl, but nothing you won't pick up in one of the specialist stores.

5 THE HILLS WEREN'T ALIVE…
Austria's second-biggest tourist destination, Salzburg, is light on record shopping. Good job, too, as following in the footsteps of Maria is the main focus here. The only option I did find – Minerva Records at 6 Schallmooser Haupstrasse – served a great coffee and had a decent selection of new and second-hand vinyl.

VIENNA

9 DYNAMIC

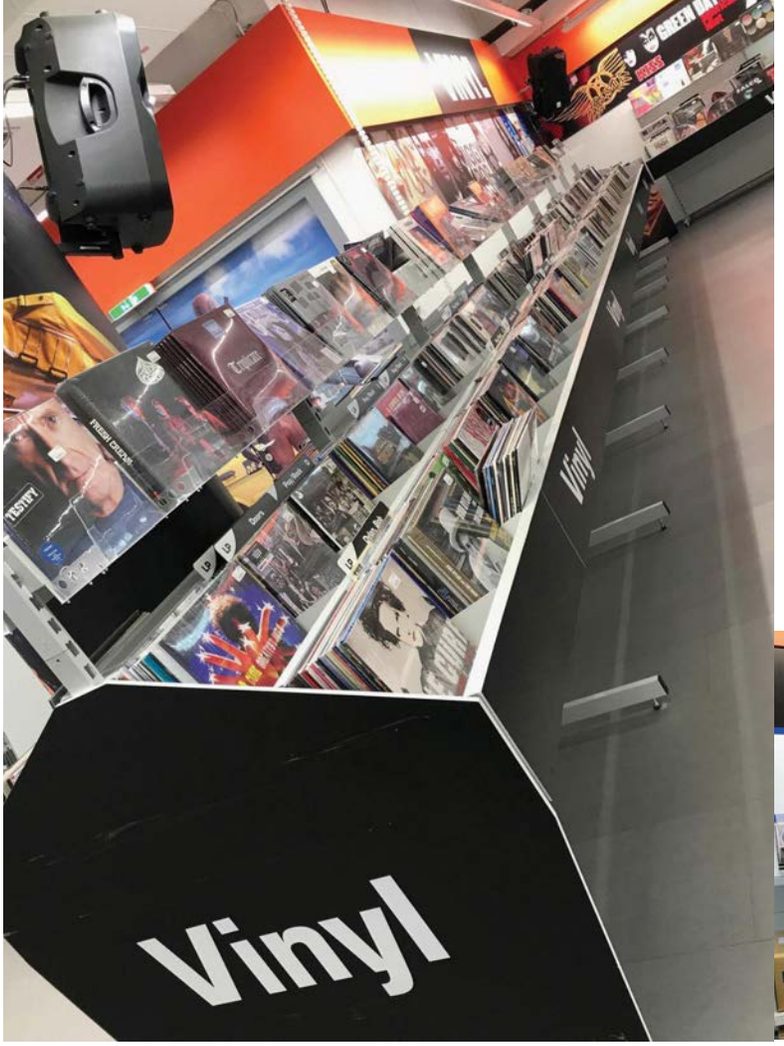
Another dance specialist that's worth a mention, with a broad range of electronica for sale, too. You may need to knock next door at the vintage-clothing shop to gain entry, but it's worth a visit if this is your thing.



10 RECORDBAG

This handsome Viennese institution carries the best range of new stock I encounter in the city. Record Store Day releases from the past few years still pack the shelves and there's a strong range of US imports, too. Again, there's little here you won't find anywhere else for around the same price, but I thought it better stocked than most of the new stores I see around the world. Again, there's clear evidence Record Store Day offers a strong draw for the newer converts to record collecting and the hardcore buyer, but I am struck by just how much of the limited-edition material is now easy to source this year, months after the event.

Handsome Viennese institution Recordbag carries the best range of new stock I encounter in the city



11 SATURN

This chain deserves a mention, as it's a predictable but reliable retailer of new vinyl. Most of the stores are situated outside the expensive shopping streets in cities across Germany, Austria and Poland (with a handful of branches in Russia and Luxembourg). The most central one in Vienna is in Mariahilfer Strasse, at the top of a shopping centre and close to Recordbag and Scout.

Saturn is a predictable but reliable retailer of new vinyl, close to Recordbag and Scout

12 SCOUT RECORDS

This crammed store has some of the chaotic charm of its English and American cousins but, in truth, stock here is ordered as carefully as elsewhere, it's just the cardboard boxes don't look quite so slick as the wooden crates I come across elsewhere in the city. Prices are very good – I make quick work of the bargain section, seizing a copy of Martha And The Muffins' *The World Is A Ball* LP, a nice copy of Cock Robin's debut for a friend who is still seemingly to be persuaded of their Roxy Music *Avalon*-era charm and The Boomtown Rats' *In The Long Grass* LP. There are loads more 45s to sift and even the better half buys a 7" dedicated to the memory of President Kennedy. It seems a suitable point to call time on this trip, with a train scheduled to Salzburg later in the afternoon. I don't know about the hills yet, but Vienna's certainly alive to the sound of music… ●

The Trip

Getting there

Flights to Vienna are pretty good value, with a range of carriers serving the city. The best way to get into the centre from the airport is via express train, which takes just 16 minutes and costs €11. Once you're in the centre, don't worry about the sightseeing tour to orientate. It's very compact and most of the key sights are within a mile of each other. The record shops are largely clustered to the south west of the city centre and will take you roughly 20 minutes to walk to, from anywhere near the cathedral.

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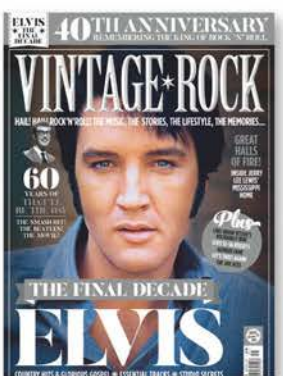

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DIGGING FOR VICTORY

Nothing should get in the way of a collecting spree – not even Christmas. **Mark O'Shaughnessy** recalls a bitterly cold festive quest for Black Gold

Detroit, Christmas 1994: "Snow ploughs the size of aircraft…". Any of you who have ever experienced bad winters in North America (thank you, Gil Scott-Heron) will know that the cold there bites deep into your very bones… no coat ever made will keep that bitter cold out, and during Christmas 1994 in the Motor City, temperatures had plummeted to minus 20 degrees – with the wind-chill factor taking it a degree or two lower.

I have never felt cold like it, folks, it was literally inhibiting. Snow was deep on the ground and the massive snow ploughs you seem to see only in North America were working at full pelt – they were the size of combine harvesters, and incredibly efficient.

The good thing was, in that part of the States, the Black Gold was always deep in the seam. With Detroit's famed Tamla Motown legacy blaring at you from every angle in the city, there's also a deep vein of rock heritage there, via bands such as The Stooges and MC5, to name but a few. Plus, we had the then-burgeoning techno scene, which was in full flow at that point. People, there were records everywhere that Christmas... The only problem we had was what to leave behind.

My oppo on this trip was my ex-partner in Resolution Records, Chris Fleming… hi, Chris. Sealed house 12"s were piled up in the record stores for two bucks a pop, three for $5 – thousands upon thousands of them, multiple copies, just sat there winking at us. It was surreal.

There were thrift stores with whole rooms, where the records were absolutely overwhelming, even for a wizened old pro like me – we are talking box after box after box of 7"s. We spent a whole day in one thrift in a Detroit 'burb on that trip. Imagine it – spending a whole day in a charity shop! Well, we did.

Let me explain something about thrift stores in the States. They don't operate in the same way that our quaint little charity shops do over here in the UK; they have very little to do with charity. Over there, these joints are serious business operations and some can end up the size of actual department stores – it's mind boggling. They're not 'charity' shops *per se*, just actual 'junk' shops with whole floors dedicated to different themes: usually furniture on the ground floor, clothing on the next floor… while (generally) books and records have their own joint area, near the top of the building. I can remember one thrift store on this trip in the centre of the city that was the size of a midrange supermarket… there must have been 50 staff!

I always take my SoundBurger portable record player with me on these trips and, boy, did it earn its wages in Detroit that Christmas... USA thrifts tend to store 45s out of sleeves horizontally (painful reading, I know) and, like thrifts the world over, the vast majority of what they sell is just junk. But, faced with the kind of volume that these places carry, there is always plenty worth buying and we definitely filled our boots that trip. Had we been clothes dealers, we would have been able to buy original 'big L' Levi's for $5 a pair – they were piled floor to ceiling.

> ***"I can remember one thrift store on this trip in the centre of the city that was the size of a midrange supermarket… there must've been 50 staff"***

I never encountered any trouble whatsoever in Detroit. I'd had some stern warnings from other diggers and colleagues, and heard a few horror stories, but it did not put me off, because nothing ever did. Ever…

We made our merry way around as many spots in the city as we could squeeze in during our four-day stay (Vancouver was our next stop, just across the border into Canada), but without a doubt, Detroit did not disappoint that Yuletide. We even worked on Christmas Day itself. A store owner agreed to let us look in his basement and the only time he could spare was Christmas morning, so we knocked on his door at 8.30am on 25 December, 1994. Not all Americans go crazy for Christmas, and our host was one such person. I clearly recall that the only sign of Christmas I spotted in his whole house was a plastic reindeer on top of the giant TV in his lounge… humbug!

After we'd spent three solid hours down in his basement digging, we went back out into the Arctic cold and headed to Wendy's for a turkey-burger feast. Well, it was Christmas Day after all, people. ●

Mark O'Shaughnessy is the owner of Bath record shop Resolution Records and a professional record dealer since 1993

Analog Africa

Analog Africa brings some essential, yet overlooked, sounds of the continent to the world via the decidation of its founder, Samy Ben Redjeb. **Chris Parkin** catches up with this musical journeyman to find out how his label rose to prominence…

Analog Africa is, for practical purposes, based in Frankfurt. But label founder Samy Ben Redjeb is a musical wayfarer who schleps around Africa in search of increasingly obscure vinyl treasure. Along with labels such as Soundway and Africa Seven, Redjeb's excavations have hipped record buyers to 60s, 70s and 80s psych-rock, funk, soul and disco never before heard outside of Africa; music released in an era when African countries sought (and fought) for independence from colonial rule. Redjeb's obsession with this music was jump-started after discovering Thomas Mapfumo and Oliver Mtukudzi.

"They're both from Zimbabwe – and especially their first two LPs, *Gwindingwi Rine Shumba* and *Ndipeiwo Zano*," Redjeb says. Both were recorded around 1977, when the country was fighting the regime of Ian Smith. The recordings are way more advanced musically than most of the 'world music' I'd heard here in Europe. So my inspiration was mainly that: to showcase the incredible music created there that somehow feels like a parallel musical world."

Analog Africa's first release – a compilation of lilting Afro-rock by Zimbabwe's The Green Arrows – didn't emerge until 2006, but Redjeb's interest was piqued much earlier. Working as a hotel DJ in Senegal in the mid 90s, he began digging for interesting records to spin, and that's when he came across Mapfumo. The fire was lit. Soon after, Redjeb took a job as a Lufthansa flight attendant and selected routes to Addis Ababa, Lagos and Accra to enable his crate digging. Analog Africa is now a full-time occupation for Redjeb, but the process of discovery hasn't changed.

"If I'm not sleeping, then I'm working on the label," he says. "I never stop thinking about music. I'm constantly working on various projects and I try to travel to different countries to search for this stuff that has gone under the radar in the West."

The music Analog Africa releases – often saving it from impending destruction – is presented to inspire a sense of time and place: "It was clear to me that context is just as important," says Redjeb about forging his label's identity. "Interviewing the musicians, producers and engineers to give you a sense of the musical scene, the condition in which songs were recorded, all of this belongs together. You can like a song, but you'll love it once you understand the context of it."

> ON LAST YEAR'S VITAL SPACE ECHO COMP, WE HEARD THE WEIRD, SENSUAL FUNK SOUNDS OF CAPE VERDE, PLAYED ON INSTRUMENTS WASHED ASHORE IN A SHIPPING CONTAINER

Over the past decade, Redjeb's Analog Africa has become a trusted source for fans of world music. It's exposed them to the raw, vodun-funk of Orchestre Poly-Rythmo De Cotonou, horn-soaked Ghanaian psych-soul, music from 70s West Africa's "Islamic funk belt", makossa pop from Cameroon, and, on last year's vital *Space Echo* comp, the weird, sensual funk sounds of Cape Verde, played on instruments washed ashore in a shipping container.

In January, the Analog Africa label will celebrate 10 years since first lifting the lid on the psychedelic music of Benin and Togo with the label's definitive *African Scream Contest* compilation, by releasing a long-awaited follow-up. But such is Redjeb's dedication to finding new discoveries, where he'll be on release day even he doesn't know… ●

U2

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

ISLAND RECORDS

"If you like *Songs Of Innocence*," Bono wrote on U2's website within hours of the announcement of their 2014 album, "stay with us for *Songs Of Experience*. It should be ready soon enough." Oh, how that note must haunt him. As people often comment of Donald Trump's older tweets, life comes at you fast. An outcry at how their 13th album had been added, unsolicited, to people's iTunes accounts followed, and the backlash was swift and painful. The record was panned. *Songs Of Experience* failed to materialise. U2 looked lost without a paddle. As they re-evaluated their next move, world politics also shifted right, forcing them to reconsider the tone of their new songs. By 2017, instead of promoting a new album worldwide, they'd chosen to perform a 30-year-old one, *The Joshua Tree*. But this bid to remind us how they'd originally become so big that they had the power to violate our laptops paid off. Nostalgic though they were, these shows were a triumph.

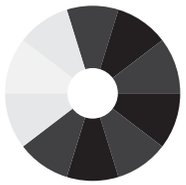
Furthermore, they reminded us U2 are an astonishing live band, their songs built for arenas. It would be easy to dismiss *You're The Best Thing About Me* for blunt lyrics and a clumsy structure, but it's meant to carry to the back of a stadium. *Get Out Of Your Own Way* is so eager to please a crowd it provides its own, and adds Kendrick Lamar, while *Love Is Bigger Than Anything In Its Way* and *The Little Things That Give You Away* highlight how U2 taught Coldplay most of what they know. Listen to the way Bono introduces the singalong section of the former tune before the piano begins the song: it's textbook Chris Martin. Even *Lights Of Home*, which begins like Beck playing *Bullet The Blue Sky*, succumbs to Bono's missionary urges, though with a grace comparable to Elbow's *One Day Like This*.

Sometimes, there's a sense we're being bludgeoned by the band's eagerness to shepherd us into their righteous community. The relentless cheer of *The Showman (Little More Better)*, which recalls *The Sweetest Thing*, soon becomes grating, rendering its grammatically flawed, feelgood chorus – "You think you look so good/ A little more better" – yet more comic. Bono's mythologising of the US continues on *American Soul* – albeit with caveats – but well-meaning though it may be, it's lyrically ham-fisted. Eyebrows will rise when he sings: "For refugees like you and me", and may actually leap off foreheads with the ludicrous pay-off: "Will you be my sanctuary/ Refujesus". Surprisingly, 2014's fiasco is perhaps better overshadowed by the album's subtler numbers: the subdued, vocoder-wielding *Love Is All We Have Left;* the contemplative, Aleppo-referencing *Summer Of Love;* and the hushed, reassuring closer, *13 (There Is A Light)*. It's rarely more than U2-by-numbers, but it's numbers that matter with U2. Experiences count, too, and they – and we – have learned from them. This is the proof.

Wyndham Wallace

VERDICT

7/10



Björk

UTOPIA

ONE LITTLE INDIAN

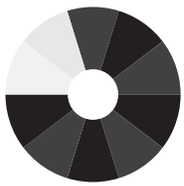
Björk's work has become increasingly demanding these past dozen years, and 2015's *Vulnicura* – inspired by her breakup with Matthew Barney – was as challenging as anything she's done. On *Utopia*, though – described as environmentally and politically themed – she sounds more positive. She's even called it her "dating album". So does happy Björk mean hit-making Björk? Nah, those days are long gone. This is similarly taxing.

One reason is her decision to employ Venezuela's Alejandro Ghersi, a.k.a. Arca, as co-producer again. His CV may include work with Kanye West and FKA Twigs, but the dancefloor's not Ghersi's destination. His shadowy, menacing soundscapes – twisted beats dropped seemingly at random, sonics glistening like a knife – are remarkable, but frequently confounding. Fortunately, this time, he and Björk allow colourful surges of amorphous cheer to overwhelm most of the gloom. That's as true on opener *Arisen My Senses* as anywhere. Beginning with birdsong, the (no doubt symbolic) sound of a tape being rewound, and confidently struck harp chords, its arrangement expands slowly to accommodate layers of her inimitable voice. The structure, too, is recognisably rhythmic, and the luminous atmosphere of the tracks that immediately follow sucks you in: *Blissing Me* boasts more plucked harp, its fluttering, creaking rhythms a reflection of excitement rather than agitation, while ecstatic flourishes of flute-like synths complement the sentiment – "If you care for me, then I'll care for you" – of the otherwise sparse *The Gate*.

But as these abstract constructions keep coming, *Utopia* starts to feel impenetrable. At the very least, with melodies sliding out of the listener's grasp and lyrics batted out of reach, it insists on substantial commitment. *Sue Me*, for a lot of its duration, is built upon a rhythm that sounds like someone moving cardboard packing cases around – and later scrubbing a stain out of a sofa – while a kindergarten group plays the recorder. *Features Creatures*, meanwhile, offers disembodied choral voices in an otherwise empty landscape, Björk waxing lyrical about a new crush in an oddly teenage fashion. Nevertheless, it's frequently rewarding, with lines such as: "These cliffs are just showing off", and the word "Kafkaesque" emerging from the mist of *Body Memory* – a landscape of choral voices, animal noises and thumps – and, on *Courtship*, birds coo and flutes flicker like butterfly wings. On *Tabula Rasa*, the beats relent to underline the elegant flutes and strings, and she sings of "not repeating the fuck-ups of the past", but on *Loss* – with additional production from Rabit – those beats sound like an avalanche. It's difficult, in other words. But of course it is: it's Björk. And it's art. Plus, there's nothing quite like it. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

8/10



Snow Palms

ORIGIN AND ECHO

VILLAGE GREEN

If there are moments on Snow Palms' second album which reflect Brian Eno's ambient work – and, on *Vostock*, this might be especially notable – then they're excusable. David Sheppard, the multi-instrumentalist behind the name, is also the author of *On Some Faraway Beach...*, the ambient pioneer's acclaimed biography. There's a great deal more to *Origin And Echo*, however, which builds upon his 2012 debut *Intervals*' focus on mallet instruments with additional instrumental textures, and is not always as peaceful as one might expect. The title track is steeped in tension, and the quiet pulse of *Echo Return* develops into a throbbing thrill. Indeed, the seven-minute *Circling* – which begins like a Steve Reich composition, its repetitive, circuitous melodies transferring between instruments – swells towards a dramatic climax. But the dominant mood is calming, with the muffled sound of a hang drum at *White Shadows*' heart and *Black Snow* as tranquil and shadowy as its name suggests. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

8/10

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Peter Broderick

ALL TOGETHER AGAIN

ERASED TAPES

Associated with the 'new classical' scene – mainly because he's shared a label with, among others, Nils Frahm and Ólafur Arnalds – Peter Broderick has explored various styles, from experimental to indie, and worked with acts including Efterklang and Sharon Van Etten. The multi-instrumentalist's latest, compiled from a decade of commissioned work, underlines why he's in demand. *Robbie's Song*, written for a film, is built quietly around a simple, melodic guitar riff but crescendoes into Mogwai territory, while two pieces for weddings, *Our Future In Wedlock* and *The Walk*, respectively feature muted solo piano and folksy solo fiddle. The highlights are Broderick's rejected but compelling attempt to soundtrack a fashion show, *If I Were A Runway Model*, 12 minutes that meander from rustic simplicity to an eerie cut-and-paste wasteland, and *A Ride On The Bosphorus*, an irresistibly appealing 17-minute ad for river cruising. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

9/10

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Bitchin Bajas

BAJAS FRESH

DRAG CITY

It's three years since Cooper Crain's dream-droners Bitchin Bajas released an album on their own. In that time, though, the Chicago group's stock has risen. They've made a record of Zen mantras with Bonnie 'Prince' Billy, a soundtrack to Olivia Wyatt's film about Burma's Moken people, *Sailing A Sinking Sea*, and a majestic collaborative affair with Joshua Abrams' Natural Information Society. They're back on their own now, though, and like Abrams' own astral-surfing album earlier this year, *Simultonality*, *Bajas Fresh* is a work of blissful drift inspired by the hypnotic repetition of spiritual jazz, world music and kirtan synth jams. Its long, cellular tracks unfurl peacefully into a pool of oscillating synths, gentle woodwind and fleet-fingered percussion, with the Bajas' cover of Sun Ra's *Angels And Demons At Play* out-cosmic-ing the master himself. It's more than deep enough to deserve its half-speed mastering treatment at Abbey Road. *Chris Parkin*

VERDICT

9/10

Jim James

TRIBUTE TO 2

ATO RECORDS

Ostensibly the My Morning Jacket frontman's follow-up to his six-song EP of George Harrison and Beatles covers from 2009, this is a far more ambitious and expansive undertaking than that lo-fi offering. James' last solo outing was the heavily politicised *Eternally Even* and he returns here with a remarkable collection of 11 covers, themed as 'songs of hope', that's wildly diverse, yet thrillingly coherent. James opens with a stunning recasting of The Beach Boys' *I Just Wasn't Made For These Times* and a heartbreaking take on Sonny & Cher's *Baby Don't Go*. You may know *Midnight, The Stars And You* from *The Shining*, and James amps up the eeriness here to woozily fine effect. He nails Willie Nelson's *Funny How Time Slips Away*, and has fun with an exaggerated country drawl on Dylan's *I'll Be Your Baby Tonight* and the perky old-time-y jazz standard *Love Is The Sweetest Thing*. An open-minded, multi-genre treat. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

8/10

Charlotte Gainsbourg

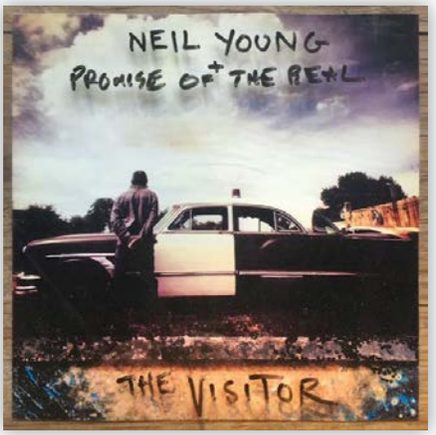
REST

BECAUSE MUSIC

Charlotte Gainsbourg's fifth, *Rest*, finds acclaimed French producer Sebastian in charge, Tom Elmhirst (Bowie's *Blackstar*) mixing, and Owen Pallett arranging. There are co-writes with Daft Punk's Guy-Manuel de Homem-Christo and Sir Paul McCartney. But still the shadow of parents, Serge Gainsbourg and Jane Birkin, hangs overhead. Charlotte embraces their influence, whether in how her voice reaches demurely for its upper register – like her mother's – or the grandiose strings on the Moroder-esque *Deadly Valentine*. There's even a lyrically bold, musically baroque recollection of her father's passing, *Lying With You*, and of her late half-sister on the sombre, striking *Kate*. The mood lightens on *Sylvia Says*, with its disco groove, and McCartney's sparkling *Songbird In A Cage*, but even when she switches from French to English, as on *Ring-A-Ring O' Roses*, echoing Francis Lai's soundtracks, this is full of Gallic sophistication. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

8/10



Neil Young

THE VISITOR

REPRISE

Neil Young's second hook-up with Promise Of The Real is more stylistically expansive than we've come to expect from his recent releases, pinballing from the epic to the concise and the politically charged to the plaintive. Opener *Already Great* is an effective Trump smackdown – a celebration of liberty: "I'm Canadian by the way, but I love the USA" – something that's continued in the largely acoustic *Harvest Moon*-esque *Almost Always*. Meanwhile, the two-minute thrash of *Fly By Night Deal* is a heartfelt environmental plea and *Stand Tall* a passionate call for equality.

Most surprising of all is centrepiece *Carnival*, an eight-minute Cuban-influenced extravaganza that floats into Santana territory with Young cast as a crazed narrator. The woozy rock of *Diggin' A Hole* could have come straight from the *Tonight's The Night* sessions, and *Children Of Destiny* proves Young's ability to write an anthem hasn't deserted him. Sterling stuff that's worth revisiting time and again. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

8/10

Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds

WHO BUILT THE MOON?

SOUR MASH

In 2011, Noel Gallagher was said to be working on a collaborative 'space rock' album with Amorphous Androgynous (aka Future Sound Of London). In the end, he claimed he'd destroyed the master, and just two tracks made it onto 2015's *Chasing Yesterday*. *Who Built The Moon?* suggests his psychedelic tendencies have resurfaced, and his Beatles obsession seems to have shifted to their final albums. *It's A Beautiful World* borrows from *Tomorrow Never Knows*, while *Be Careful What You Wish For*'s riff and rhythm will be familiar from *Abbey Road*'s *I Want You (She's So Heavy)*. The style suits him. Opener *Fort Knox* feels like there's a rip in the space-time continuum. Powered by a *Screamadelica*-esque breakbeat and decorated by freaky chants and a ruthless bassline, it sets the scene for a number of monstrous tunes. *Holy Mountain* triumphantly pairs T. Rex with a penny whistle, *The Man Who Built The Moon* ropes in the biggest orchestra Gallagher could find, and *She Taught Me How To Fly* is Oasis supercharged by New Order. Oasis fans will also be satisfied by *Black And White Sunshine* and bonus track *Dead In The Water*. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

7/10

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Hüsker Dü

SAVAGE YOUNG DÜ

NUMERO GROUP

Hüsker Dü laid the groundwork for grunge's breakthrough when they became one of the first US alt.rock bands to sign to a major label, but before that deal they had to pay their dues. *Savage Young Dü* chronicles the embryonic days of the influential US post-punk band. Over eight sides of vinyl and 69 songs (47 previously unreleased), the nascent noisemongers are captured at their primitive best. The journey starts with some wonderfully rough-and-ready board recordings from some of the Minneapolis trio's earliest gigs in 1979 through to session recordings, demos and early classic *Statues/Amusement* in 1983. What's more, there's a remastered version of debut studio album *Everything Falls Apart* and also an alternative, superior take on live album *Land Speed Record* (17 songs in 26 minutes). One of the band's greatest strengths was the competitive force of its two songwriters, with angsty guitarist Bob Mould and dreamy drummer Grant Hart both adept at carving out a pure pop melody from behind the blistering wall of hardcore thrash. Sadly, Hart succumbed to liver cancer in September, but this treasure trove of early recordings is an appropriate document of his and his bandmates' pioneering punk spirit. Hüsker Dü is Danish for 'Do you remember?'. The answer is: 'Yeah, of course we do'. *Gary Tipp*

VERDICT

9/10

Various Artists

SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER (ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK)

CAPITOL/VIRGIN EMI

As Simon Spence chronicles in his recent Bee Gees biography, *Staying Alive…*, no one expected *Saturday Night Fever* – either the film or the soundtrack – to be a big seller. Disco was already on the wane when it was released in 1977. But by the spring of '78, both movie and soundtrack had gone stratospheric. In just six months, this double LP sold 18 million copies – more than the three previous highest-selling LPs of all time combined. Bonus material-wise, this 40th Anniversary Super Deluxe Edition elevates the project into a more credible statement of cultural heritage. The key parts: a remastered soundtrack on gatefold 180g vinyl, the 4K Director's Cut (and original Theatrical Version) of the movie on Blu-ray and new sleevenotes from Barry Gibb in a 23-page book, which also features overdue recognition for the film's music supervisor and soundtrack producer, Bill Oakes. *Ian Peel*

VERDICT

7/10

John Williams

HARRY POTTER: ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACKS I-V

RHINO

If ever a soundtrack series was composed to be consumed physically, it's this – largely the work of living legend John Williams – which has been re-pressed across a set of five double picture discs, each one in a die-cut sleeve.

Williams scored the first three films – 2001's *Philosopher's Stone*, 2002's *Chamber Of Secrets* and 2004's *Prisoner Of Azkaban* – the first of which included *Hedwig's Theme*, which became the series' most recognisable musical motif and was used in every subsequent movie.

2005's *Goblet Of Fire* is worth picking up for fans of Pulp and Radiohead, as they made up the fictional rock band who contribute three tracks. 2007's *Order Of The Phoenix*, meanwhile, runs slightly shorter, so Side Four is an etching as opposed to music. But that's all the more Hogwarts-like, we think. In fact, all that's missing here are some secret backwards messages and spells in the run-off grooves. *Ian Peel*

VERDICT

7/10

The Beatles

THE BEATLES CHRISTMAS RECORDS BOX

APPLE/EMI

For those of you who want a feast of Fab Four festiveness, this limited-edition boxset of The Beatles' Christmas messages for fan-club members between 1963 to 1969 will fit the bill. All seven messages have now been newly pressed on coloured 7" vinyl.

After the straightforward 'thank-yous' of the early years, featuring their inimitable waggish wit (the influence of *The Goon Show* looms large), by 1966, they twist the form and splice together a surrealist pantomime. The following year's random skits reflect the cut-and-paste psychedelic aesthetic of their *Magical Mystery Tour* project and 1968's message drops samples of 'White Album' songs into the mayhem, as Lennon riffs on Stanley Unwin's bizarre speech patterns. Tiny Tim even plays *Nowhere Man* on ukulele. Their final message, recorded after the band had unofficially split, includes Lennon interviewed by Yoko behind the "Elizabethan high walls" of their Tittenhurst Park estate. My, how far they'd travelled. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

7/10

LONG LIVE VINYL CHOICE

Yes

TOPOGRAPHIC DRAMA – LIVE ACROSS AMERICA

RHINO

Recent Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame inductees, the legendary progressive rock band Yes have released a triple live album, no less. And Yes fans will be in seventh heaven, as it comprises their classic 1980 album *Drama* in its entirety, plus selections from their iconic 1973 concept album *Tales From Topographic Oceans* (complete with cover-art design by Roger Dean, a former *Long Live Vinyl* interviewee). This special collection features live performances from 12 dates recorded in February 2017 by the current Yes line-up: Steve Howe (guitars), Alan White (drums), Geoff Downes (keyboards), Billy Sherwood (bass), Jon Davison (vocals), and additional drummer Jay Schellen. Live albums can be hit-and-miss affairs, but when they work, as this one does – with a sound that's highly present and full of crystal-clear musical details – they're a treat. A very fine set of classic Yes songs, superbly performed. *Jonathan Webster*

VERDICT

9/10

Saxon

DECADE OF THE EAGLE

BMG

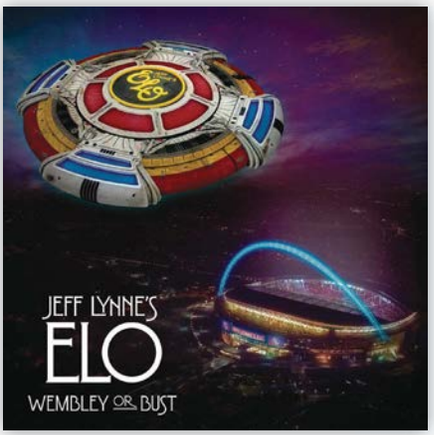
Decade Of The Eagle is a Deluxe four-LP (180g vinyl) set that spans the South Yorkshire metal band's first nine albums and represents the very best of the first decade of their career, comprising 34 classic tracks.

The quality feel of this release extends to the gatefold sleeve, which features a special metallic embossed coin on the cover, and includes new liner notes by frontman Biff Byford that document the decade and are accompanied by rarely seen, classic photos from the 1980s, when Saxon were in their heavy-metal ascendancy. This music is essentially for metal-heads, and these LPs show, musically and sonically speaking, just how Saxon rose in 10 blistering years to carve a place at the very top of the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal movement. Bugger the neighbours. Play these fine songs loud...

Jonathan Webster

VERDICT

7/10



Jeff Lynne's ELO

WEMBLEY OR BUST

SONY

Reliving ELO's summer Wembley show, it's hard to shake off thoughts of two people. One is Paul McCartney, whose influence on Jeff Lynne's songwriting is indisputable. Lennon even called ELO "the sons of The Beatles". But though this souvenir includes less familiar material, such as The Move's *Do Ya*, the Traveling Wilburys' *Handle With Care*, and the wonderfully nostalgic *When I Was A Boy* (from 2015's *Alone In The Universe*), the crowd-pleasing hits underline just how much Macca's prints are all over ELO's catalogue.

The second image is of Alan Partridge jumping around to Wings' *Jet*, provoked by a DVD component of ageing men pumping the air. Their ecstasy is reasonable, given this almost uninterrupted parade of classics: *Evil Woman*, *Showdown*, *Don't Bring Me Down*, all delivered by crack musicians. Studio versions are more refined, but ELO shows are so rare, this was worth documenting. *Wyndham Wallace*

VERDICT

7/10

The Alan Parsons Project

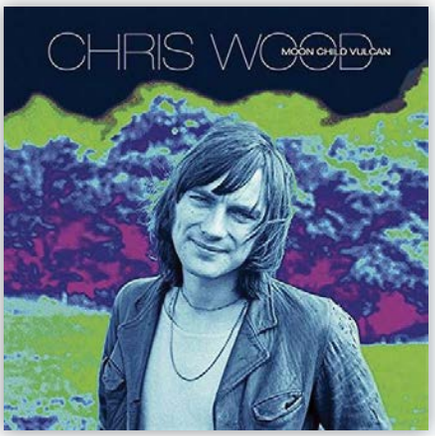
EYE IN THE SKY

SONY LEGACY

The 'deluxification' of The Alan Parsons Project is not a new thing, by any means. This time, though, for the LP's 35th anniversary, the extras are out in force. The album's been remastered at half-speed, so occupies two discs. Your turntable can also finally greet the mythical *An Eye Opener*, via a replica of the four-track green flexi-disc promo sampler. There are bonus tracks aplenty, the highlights of which are the three rare, remastered single edits of the title track, *Old And Wise* and *Psychobabble*, a 5.1 Surround Sound mix of the original album sequence on Blu-ray, and – from the demos disc – the '12-string Acoustic Guitar & Marching Band Snare Drum' take of *Children Of The Moon*. That's to say nothing of the emotionally charged audio diaries of Parsons' late songwriting partner, Eric Woolfson. *Ian Peel*

VERDICT

8/10



Chris Wood

MOON CHILD VULCAN

CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL

If Steve Winwood was Traffic's soulful prodigy and Dave Mason delivered the hits, then perhaps flautist and sax player Chris Wood provided their more hippyish ambience. After the band split in 1974, it was three years before Chris would be lured back into the recording studio, and these are the previously unreleased results. Found languishing in a West Country barn, the master tapes that *Moon Child Vulcan* has been compiled from were saved from oblivion after going missing following Wood's premature death in 1983. The detective work leading to its discovery was well worth the effort: a diverse set of instrumentals, the Afrobeat opener *Song For Pete* is particularly fine, as is the graceful jazz-funk of *See No Man Girl* and slinky *Don't It. Jam In Butter*, featuring Herbie Hancock-style synths, is more experimental, while Winwood's guitar and electric-piano contributions to the title track return us to more traditional 70s songcraft. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

7/10

Bill Wyman's Rhythm Kings

MY KING AND QUEEN

DEMON

While this expansive four-disc set (and debut on vinyl for the Rhythm Kings) ostensibly acts as a hat-tip to longstanding vocalist members Georgie Fame and session supremo Beverley Skeete, it's some of the cameos that will also make this a must-buy for fans of the well-connected Bill Wyman and his rolling traditional r'n'b review combo. Eric Clapton's playing is beautifully fluid and understated on *Gee Baby Ain't I Good For You*, and Peter Frampton is slyly funky on *Anyway The Wind Blows*. Even George Harrison puts in an appearance on slide guitar, during a wonderful take on the old standard *Love Letters*. They've made their reputation on the road, but this set proves the Rhythm Kings were also no slouches in the studio, either. *Steve Harnell*

VERDICT

7/10

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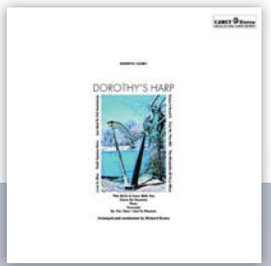
Genre Hopping
Experimental Jazz

A resurgence of interest in 60s and 70s reissues from the outer reaches of jazz sees **Chris Parkin** don his multicoloured Afrofuturistic spacesuit to voyage into the lesser known…



One of this year's finest releases, reissue or otherwise, is Luaka Bop's compilation of Alice Coltrane's ashram recordings, *World Spirituality Classics 1: The Ecstatic Music of Alice Coltrane Turiyasangitananda*. As incredible as it is, though, it's also something of an *amuse-bouche* before diving into this year's other similarly minded jazz reissues.

With interest piqued by contemporary artists such as Kamasi Washington, Thundercat and Matthew Halsall, and the arrival of Germany's ECM label on streaming services, vinyl hunters are hungry for free and spiritual jazz classics from the 60s and 70s.

Luaka Bop's release isn't the only 2017 reissue to feature Alice Coltrane. Up there with her ashram recordings is Joe Henderson's 1973 album, *The Elements*, on which Coltrane injects her world-music studies into the tenor saxophonist's melodic improvisation. It's one of Henderson's finest (and most unusual) albums.

Superior Viaduct, meanwhile, have released Alice Coltrane's album with her husband, and spiritual jazz progenitor, John. *Cosmic Music* is a flawed but beautifully contemplative album, with Alice piloting the two standout tracks recorded in the wake of her husband's death in 1967.

The same label has also reissued *Sun Ra Arkestra Featuring Pharoah Sanders And Black Harold* – an album recorded in 1964, but not released until 1976, when Sanders was better known, and even then, only in a limited run. It's an early, percussive pointer to the outer cosmos where both were heading, and has since become a jazz collector's wet dream.

Of course, Sun Ra's music features heavily in the 'jazz reissues' racks every year. It's no different in 2017, with the second instalment of Strut Records' *Sun Ra Singles* collection now out, alongside reissues of *Discipline 27-11*, recorded during the same sessions as his classic *Space Is The Place*, and pivotal albums *The Magic City*, *My Brother The Wind, Vol. 1* and *Thunder Of The Gods*.

> SUN RA ARKESTRA FEATURING PHAROAH SANDERS AND BLACK HAROLD IS AN EARLY POINTER TO THE OUTER COSMOS WHERE BOTH WERE HEADING, AND HAS SINCE BECOME A JAZZ COLLECTOR'S WET DREAM

Pharoah Sanders, who played with both Coltranes, Don Cherry and many others, has been less well represented by reissues. His groundbreaking albums for Impulse!, from 1966 to 74, are some of the best in that prestigious label's back catalogue and yet most have remained out of print for decades. But this year, three albums by the man named by Sun Ra, who Ornette Coleman called the best tenor player in the world, have been made available. *Tauhid* (1967), *Jewels Of Thought* (1969) and *Deaf Dumb Blind (Summun Bukmun Umyun)* (1970) are out now on *Anthology Recordings*, Mexican Summer's reissue imprint. His soulful, squalling free jazz is infused with the mysticism of Ancient Egypt and the sounds and drones of Sufism and the East, expanding the spiritual journey begun by John Coltrane.

The never-ending path through this mind-blowingly abundant period will eventually deliver you from the classic albums to increasingly esoteric outposts, such as Dorothy Ashby's *Dorothy's Harp* (Music On Vinyl) and Ahmad Jamal's *The Awakening* (Be With), both also reissued this year. Time to get started on your odyssey… ●

FESTIVE GIFTS FOR VINYL LOVERS

Long Live Vinyl rounds up some gifts guaranteed to spread the seasonal joy – taking in vinyl-ripping turntables, pages full of cleverly curated record recommendations, limited-edition album art printsand more besides, for a range of budgets…

Spin-Clean Record Washer

PRICE FROM $79.99

spincleanrecordwasher.com

Protect your turntable from the tyranny of filthy car-boot-sale bargains with the compact Spin Clean Record Washer. Rollers inside the machine accommodate LPs, 45s and 78s and cleans both sides of your record with alcohol-free cleaning fluid. A pair of lint-free cloths are supplied and the package is good for 700 cleans before you'll need to replenish supplies.

The Vinyl List

PRICE £15

octopusbooks.co.uk

This 256-page coffee-table hardback from Octopus Books catalogues "100 albums you need to own on vinyl, and why". It's edited by the record-subscription club Vinyl Me, Please, and alongside its impassioned commentaries on records is a judicious selection of cocktail recipes to help you immerse yourself in the music. The entries range from Ryan Adams to The xx, and the book's varied contributors are all united in their desire to explain what the vinyl format adds to the listening experience.

Hypergallery Album Art Prints

PRICE FROM £180

hypergallery.com

Hypergallery offers limited-edition album-cover art prints. This father-and-daughter-run venture was originally inspired by a conversation with Storm Thorgerson, and signed prints of his iconic Hypgnosis work nestle among many tempting limited-edition pieces.

Pro-Ject Debut Carbon Recordmaster Hires

PRICE £549

henleydesigns.co.uk

If ripping vinyl to digital files is something you'd like to get involved with, then Pro-Ject's fully-featured vinyl-ripping turntable model could be a worthwhile investment – not to mention a superb gift for the audiphile in your life. In his review in Issue 7 of *Long Live Vinyl*, resident turntable expert Paul Rigby was impressed, commenting on the turntable's quality, its full featureset and its ease of use. He said: "Pro-Ject has designed a ripping package that not only offers high-resolution file options, but also provides a top-quality analogue source to do the actual ripping."

RokBlok

PRICE £$89 (PRE-ORDER)

rokblok.co

Billed as "the world's smallest wireless record player", the RokBlok – measuring a measly 4x2 inches – works for up to four hours on a single charge of its rechargable battery, sends tunes via Bluetooth to connected speakers or headphones within a 30-feet radius and has a built-in preamp and two-inch analogue speaker. Fear for the safety of your records? Relax – the RokBlok has a diamond-tipped cartridge and 'vinyl-safe' rubber wheels. ●

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FUNK FIRM GETT!

INNOVATIVE MID-PRICED TURNTABLE

£607 *thefunkfirm.co.uk 07846 798367*

A turntable that combines a relatively low price with technical innovation… **Paul Rigby** takes a closer look at The Funk Firm's Gett!

If you've been around hi-fi products and/or the hi-fi industry for a while, then you will likely know all about the famed Pink Triangle line of turntables. If there was one manufacturer's product that would cause the legendary Linn Sondek to wake up screaming with the night sweats, then it was likely from the Pink Triangle range. The company folded back in 2003, but the creative genius behind the brand, Arthur Khoubesserian, has moved onwards and upwards. He is the man behind The Funk Firm and the Gett! turntable on review here.

The Gett!, sitting on an MDF platter and rubber feet, is the company's entry-level design but, even here, features a sprinkling of design innovations. Khoubesserian can't help himself. After all, this is the man who invented the acrylic platter. He even owned the patent for a time.

Before we get to the innovations, for many people, the most obvious and welcome feature of this two-speed design will be the easy-to-use-and-access speed-change knob. This makes a nice change from moving a belt from one pulley groove to another, and will appeal to many beginners.

KING OF THE SWINGERS

When operating this speed-change knob the first innovation lurches into view, because the knob and pulley are right next to each other. It's unusual to see the motor positioned in the front-left position instead of the usual back-left (the traditional format, which was established many years ago, when hi-fi shielding was basic or non-existent). According to Khoubesserian, because technology has moved onwards, there is no need to retain this 'outdated' design position, which can have an adverse effect on the cartridge and causes a 'thrum' or low-frequency bloom sound. The repositioning is designed to remove this negative effect.

The aluminium arm with acrylic headshell is another design point of note, because it's based upon a threaded configuration. The arm is suspended by threads… so imagine a child's swing. The arm acts as the seat on that swing, while the bias is altered on the rotating knob, twisting the swing itself. It's a tough design to implement, but offers numerous sonic benefits, such as a free and open presentation.

Installing the turntable was relatively easy and straightforward. The only point

you need to take care with is, of all things, putting the belt around the rim of the platter – mainly because it tends to slip off easily while you're doing it. The company promises to post a video to show you how to do this in seconds but, for those who are as inept as I am in such matters, I would recommend taping the belt with low-tack white tape around the rim in four or five places; then stretch the belt over the pulley and (carefully!) relax each tape tab away from the rim of the platter.

POP, FUNK AND JAZZ

I tried a range of music during my sound tests, from Fun Boy Three (high-energy pop) to Shakatak (jazz funk) and Joe Jackson (jazz). I was impressed by the open and airy nature of the soundstage, but also by how layered that soundstage was.

THIS INNOVATIVE AND WELL-DESIGNED TURNTABLE OFFERS SOMETHING THAT'S A LITTLE DIFFERENT FROM ANYTHING ELSE OUT THERE IN THIS PRICE BRACKET

These layers never masked each other; every element of detail remained on show, tickling the ears with clarity and information and causing the head to move rapidly from left to right to scoop it all up. I was surprised at the quality and nature of the bass via the Gett!.

The turntable offered punch, but also a heft that arrived with an organic, tonally realistic movement. I never felt that the bass was 'manufactured', as you might hear from a drum machine, for example.

Offering a combination of precise control over more potentially chaotic frequencies, detail, air and space in the midrange, with impressive lower-end performance, this innovative and well-designed turntable delivers something that's a little different from anything else out there in this price bracket. In conclusion, it's one of the best turntables you can buy for under £1,000. ●

VERDICT

PROS	CONS
LAYERED SOUNDSTAGE	BELT INSTALLATION
CLARITY	
ORGANIC BASS	
TONAL REALISM	
PRICE	

SCORE
31/33⅓

T+A G2000 R

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ta-hifi.de, Kog Audio 024 7722 0650

Paul Rigby reviews the T+A G2000 R, a luxury version of an increasingly popular all-in-one turntable design

Whenever I review a product, there are always a couple of impressions that hit me square in the face during the first hour as I unpack and install the thing. With the T+A G2000 R, one of them is the weight. I initially picked it up after handling regulation turntables of around 5kg. Hence, I motioned to pick up the T+A and… it didn't move. This was because it's 14kg. Not spine shattering, I know, but a dead weight nevertheless. More weighty than that, though, is the build quality of the entire deck. It's solid. Very solid indeed. Quite possibly nuke proof, in fact.

If you want to grab a G2000 R turntable without a tone arm, then you're welcome to do so, but you can add an arm and a cartridge to save time and effort. That's what I did – and you can see the Carbon 2-equipped Clearaudio option that includes a carbon-fibre tube with a 2g tracking MC-2 cartridge (with micro-line stylus) in the accompanying images. The MC-2 is an intriguing cartridge, because it resembles a similar model that is currently on sale via Clearaudio as the Essence MC. T+A may have a special OEM version for use with this turntable, as the guts of the cartridge have been tweaked a tad.

PLUG-IN BABY

As you can also see in the pictures here, the dual-speed turntable is covered in an aluminium skin. Underneath that is solid MDF, while the four feet that are attached underneath do their best to remove vibrations.

The platter fitted above is aluminium, while the mat is of a ground-rubber type. The belt is powered by a quartz-controlled AC synchronous motor, with control handled by a DSP circuit. You'll see this bit of circuitry in action when you select your preferred speed. Initially, not much will happen; then speed will increase until the correct setting is found. Only at that time will the accompanying speed indicator light up.

I MOTIONED TO PICK UP THE T+A AND… IT DIDN'T MOVE. THIS WAS BECAUSE IT'S 14KG. THE BUILD QUALITY IS VERY SOLID INDEED. QUITE POSSIBLY NUKE PROOF, IN FACT

Dust haters will be happy to learn that a cover is included. This one is moulded along a horizontal plain: different, and quite stylish.

The turntable can hold a plug-in module phono amplifier. Tweaking the settings has to be done via DIP switches under the unit, which is awkward and not particularly friendly. I realise this system keeps costs lower, but it's still fiddly to operate and a rather scary prospect for the inexperienced.

Playing a slice of jazz from Joe Jackson, I was impressed by the upright bass, that served as a strong foundation to the track. The lower frequencies were punchy and impressive in terms of transient speed, which allowed the track to move at a nimble pace.

An additional piece of good news was that this bass was not pervasive

across the soundstage. Yes, the sound signature was slightly warming, but not as bad as it could have been if the bass 'infected' the midband. In that area, brass offered both insight and detail, with a fluidity that aided the naturalistic aspect of the music.

FUN AND FUNKY

Funky vibes from Shakatak showcased the piano as a lead instrument. It's one of the most difficult instruments to handle properly, and many hi-fi components cannot control it. But the T+A added a touch of warmth to its output, adding a relaxing aspect to its sound but also necessary precision and authority.

On high-energy Fun Boy Three track, *Our Lips Are Sealed*, I was impressed by the instrumental separation from the T+A, which helped the track to flow.

A solid performance platform, the G2000 R turntable exudes confidence and feels like it will be working well for many years to come. That confidence is also present in the sonics. Overall, this is a turntable that offers no vices. You can trust it, which is important at this price point. ●

VERDICT

PROS

BASS STRENGTH
BUILD QUALITY
CONFIDENT MIDRANGE
BROAD SOUNDSTAGE

CONS

PHONO-AMP DIP SWITCHES

SCORE
28/33⅓

PICK UP THE PHONO

If you want vinyl to be part of your hi-fi system, you need a phono-equipped preamplifier. **Huw Price** has previous…

The resurgence of interest in vinyl has spawned plenty of products, and record players are now even available at Argos and Tesco. However, in faux briefcase and retro Dansette-style cases, many of these may be more about cashing in on a craze than high-quality audio reproduction. Lower-end turntables often have USB and line-level outputs, which indicates that there's a built-in preamplifier. This is important – turntables need suitable preamps to integrate with hi-fi systems.

Whether you're rediscovering vinyl or you're a recent convert, you're probably reading this article because you're getting serious about it. This usually goes hand-in-hand with upgrading your gear, but hi-fi quality turntables are unlikely to come with an integrated preamp – and you can forget about USB.

You cannot simply plug a turntable into a hi-fi amplifier and expect it to sound good unless it has a dedicated phono stage in the preamp. Sadly, since the 1980s, fewer and fewer hi-fi amplifiers have been suitably equipped. So what does 'phono' really mean, and why is it necessary?

ON THE CURVE

Dedicated phono preamps serve two functions – firstly, they 'correct' the frequency response of the input

REGA FONO MM SPECS

Input sensitivity
1.7mV for 200mV output

Input loading
47KΩ in parallel with 100pF

Maximum input level
60mV at 1KHz

Gain
41.4dB at 1KHz

Output impedance
200Ω

Recommended minimum output load resistance
5KΩ

Frequency response (50KΩ output load)
15Hz (-3dB) to 100KHz (-0.2dB)

RIAA accuracy (50KΩ output load)
Better than +/-0.2dB 100Hz to 100KHz

Power requirements
24V AC at 80mA maximum. Only to be used with Rega PS1 power supply

YOU CANNOT SIMPLY PLUG A TURNTABLE INTO A HI-FI AMPLIFIER AND EXPECT IT TO SOUND GOOD UNLESS IT HAS A DEDICATED PHONO STAGE IN THE PREAMP

signal, and secondly, they amplify a relatively tiny signal from the stylus to line level. Line level equates to the output signal strength of hi-fi devices such as CD players, tuners and cassette machines. The amplification bit is fairly self-explanatory, but what about frequency correction? Put simply, there are various issues inherent with vinyl discs, and these difficulties are mostly physical.

Due to the 12" diameter limit of an LP record, the average groove width needs to be restricted in order to squeeze five or six songs per side onto a disc. Disc-cutting engineers understand that restricting low-frequency content allows extended playing times and reduces stress on styli. There are also playback issues, because clicks and high-frequency hiss are all part and parcel of the vinyl experience.

The solution to these problems is known as RIAA (Recording Industry Association Of America) equalisation, and it has been the industry standard since about 1954. In essence, the engineer in the mastering room rolls off the bass frequencies and boosts the high frequencies prior to cutting the disc from which all subsequent vinyl pressings will be made. Consequently, these equalisation adjustments must be reversed for playback, which is why the phono input of any hi-fi automatically adjusts for the RIAA curve by boosting bass and reducing treble.

Done properly, this restores the flat frequency response, and it reduces hiss without making a record sound dark or dull. Engineers call these processes 'pre-emphasis' and 'de-emphasis'. So, if you already have an amplifier you enjoy but it doesn't have a phono input, does that mean you have to buy a new amp if you want to integrate a quality turntable with your existing hi-fi setup?

Rega's Fono MK3 preamp is the brainchild of electronics designer Terry Bateman

PREAMP OPTIONS

You'll no doubt be relieved to learn that the answer is 'No'. A phono preamp will always be necessary, but there are plenty of standalone units to choose from and you can plug one directly into any unused line input on your existing amplifier.

TO PRE OR NOT TO PRE?

Integrated or standalone? You have a range of options when designing your hi-fi system…

In fact, a standalone phono preamp will probably be an upgrade on the phono preamp built into most amplifiers. By and large, phono preamps are relatively small and come with their own power supplies. Most don't even have a volume control, so you plug your turntable into the phono preamp and connect the phono preamp's output to a spare line-level input on your amplifier. All tone and volume adjustments can then be made, as usual.

Of course, where there are multiple preamp options, there are always factors to consider when choosing the right one for you – or, more accurately, your cartridge. The primary concern is whether your cartridge is a moving-magnet or moving-coil device.

The vast majority of affordable cartridges have moving magnets and since they generate a higher output level, they are less demanding on the phono preamp. Moving-coil cartridges tend to cost more and some hi-fi enthusiasts regard the sound quality as superior. However, output level is lower, so the preamp has to be able to provide sufficient gain while maintaining low hiss and hum levels. Some phono preamps can switch between both types, but most will specify one or the other. You should also ascertain the recommended input impedance for your cartridge. The information may be provided with the packaging the cartridge came with, or you may find it online. If you're still stuck, consult the manufacturer to find out.

Similarly, manufacturers will usually provide the input impedance of a phono preamp in the specs. The unit may even have impedance-selector switching, or a continually variable impedance control. The impedance relationship between cartridge and preamp can affect frequency response and clarity. For most of us, a ballpark match will be sufficient, but a variable-input control allows setting by ear. After all, finding the sound you like is the 'measurement' that matters most for recreational listening. Also consider whether you want a USB output for transferring vinyl onto your computer. Vinyl purists might get sniffy about it, but we all enjoy listening to music in the car, or on portable devices.

Do you need a built-in volume control? If you're running a phono amp into an integrated hi-fi amp (combined preamp and power amp) or a standalone line preamp, the answer is probably 'No'. But a volume control will be needed if you want to run your phono preamp directly into

WHERE THERE ARE MULTIPLE PREAMP OPTIONS, THERE ARE ALWAYS FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING THE RIGHT ONE FOR YOU – OR, MORE ACCURATELY, YOUR CARTRIDGE

a power amp. The volume control can be integral to the preamp, or you can use a passive preamp between the phono preamp and the power amp.

IN THE PREGNANT PAUSE BETWEEN DROPPING THE LEVER AND THE STYLUS HITTING THE OUTER GROOVES, THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING… JUST TOTAL SILENCE

REGA FONO MM MK3 PREAMP

During the course of my Leak TL/12 Plus restoration feature series in recent issues, I received an email from Terry Bateman – electronics designer for UK hi-fi equipment manufacturer, Rega. It turns out that Terry is a Leak enthusiast and collector, and we were soon chatting about suitable phono preamps. Valve amps such as Leaks, which have front ends that are a bit too sensitive for modern line-level sources such as CD players, can present problems. Terry suggested I might try the Fono preamp he designed for Rega, along with a passive preamp.

The latest Mk3 Fono is available in MM (moving magnet) and MC (moving coil) guises, and upgrades over the Mk2 are said to include lower noise and improved sonic detail. The circuitry is solid-state but uses a fully discrete, cascaded amplifier-input stage. RIAA equalisation is divided into two stages to minimise interaction. The enclosure is aluminium and the kit ships with a Rega PS1 external power supply. Our tests combined the Fono with a Garrard 301 turntable, a Rega RB300 tonearm, a DIY passive preamp and a pair of Leak TL/12 Plus amplifiers running into a pair of IPL M3 transmission-line speakers. Two cartridges were used – a Grado Prestige Gold and a Rega Exact, supplied by Rega along with the Fono.

IN USE

In the pregnant pause between dropping the lever and the stylus hitting the outer grooves, there is absolutely nothing. This is the first time I've combined Leak valve amps with a phono preamp and experienced total silence with the volume control set for normal listening levels. Next, I notice that the bass content of my test tracks is both tighter and deeper than usual. It is also clearer and faster, so intricate kick drum and bass interplay retains energy and precision. This clarity extends right across mixes, with hi-hat patterns and picked guitar parts rendered in detail and vocals well defined, but pleasingly devoid of sibilance. Be aware that high-quality hi-fi equipment can have its downside. Where there are poor recording techniques or balance problems in a mix, a decent hi-fi will reveal everything – warts and all. The Fono is certainly capable of doing so, and sonic differences between the Grado and Rega cartridges are easy to discern.

But the main reason we are so impressed with the Fono and Leak combination is that all-valve systems can sound a bit too soft and polite – particularly vintage valve amps. The Fono keeps things lively without sounding in any way edgy or aggressive. A percussive and punchy attack, where appropriate, combines with wide-open airiness in sparser tracks and very solid imaging – both left/right and front/back. If you're still looking for the missing ingredient that will finally convince you that vinyl can equal or even surpass CD for subjective sound quality, the Rega Fono MM could be it. ●

The Rega Fono Mk3 comes in MM (moving magnet) and MC (moving coil) versions

To be in with a chance of seeing your record collection in *Long Live Vinyl*, email your details and a picture to gary.walker@anthem-publishing.com

The Vinylist

JAIME DÍAZ-GUARDAMINO

A Queen LP started **Jaime Díaz-Guardamino** on a collecting spree that's resulted in him owning 38 copies of a single Beatles album, while dreaming of a mythical 39th…

How did you catch the collecting bug? What was the first record you bought?
"I have an older brother who got me interested in music from an early age, but we only had a cassette player at home at that time. My first vinyl record was bought in Didcot, while I was there learning English during the summer. The kid in my host family was crazy about Iron Maiden and had a huge collection, so I bought *A Kind Of Magic* by Queen because of that and I didn't even have a record player back at home! I was around 10."

What genres and artists are you most interested in collecting?
"I listen to all types of music, really. I have a mad passion for all things Beatle (I have 38 copies of *Sgt. Pepper's…*, for a start). Right now, I'm trying to complete The Coral's discography, which has been quite a challenge. I also DJ quite a lot, so I'm always looking for 45s to play in my sessions."

How many records do you have?
"I have around 7,000 LPs and 3,000 45s. I've recently had to move, so organising and putting everything into boxes has been a tough task, to say the least."

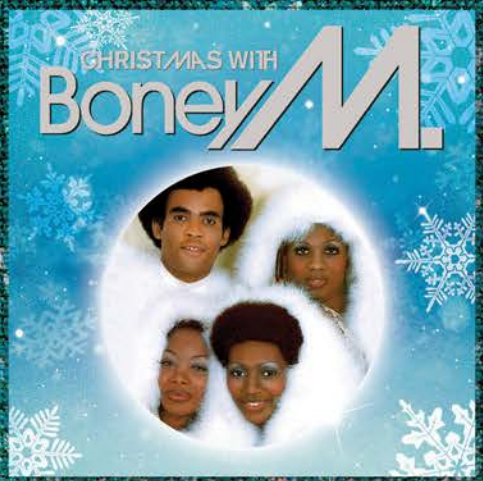
What's the most valuable record in your collection? Do you have any special rarities?
"I have a lot of Beatles rarities which are worth a lot, like some rare Spanish 45s or German imports sold in Switzerland in the 60s that were super scarce and have been sold for huge amounts online. I also have many records which were issued during the 90s/early 2000s, when nobody gave a damn about vinyl and are now worth a lot, like Blind Melon's *Soup*."

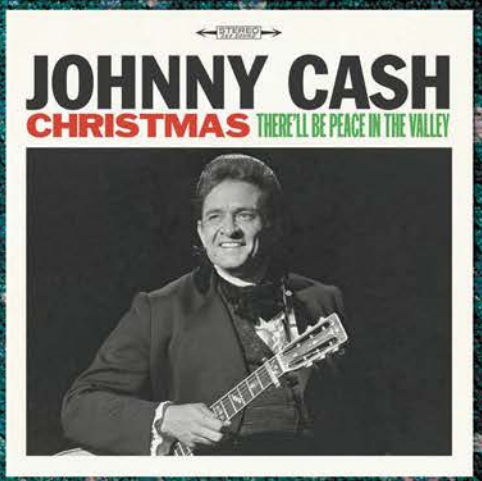
What's the Holy Grail record that you'd most like to own?
"An original UK mono pressing of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, signed by the four Beatles, would do for me."

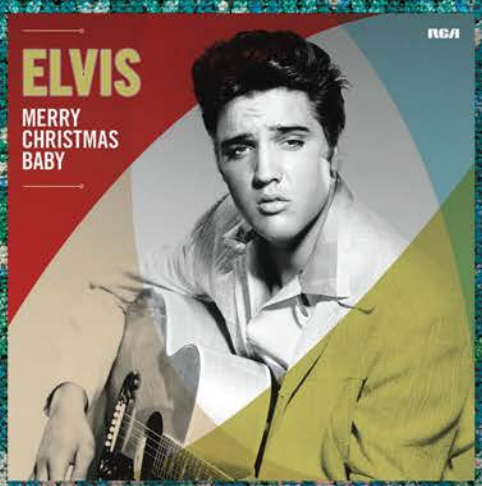
What's your listening setup?
"I have several turntables and amplifiers, but if I had to choose, I would go for my Technics SL-D2 turntable with a Yamaha AS701 amplifier and a beautiful pair of Jamo speakers." ●

A Christmas Gift For You

From Sony Legacy







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Speakers shown are Monitor Audio's Silver 100; Turntable shown is Roksan's Xerxes 20 Plus.